

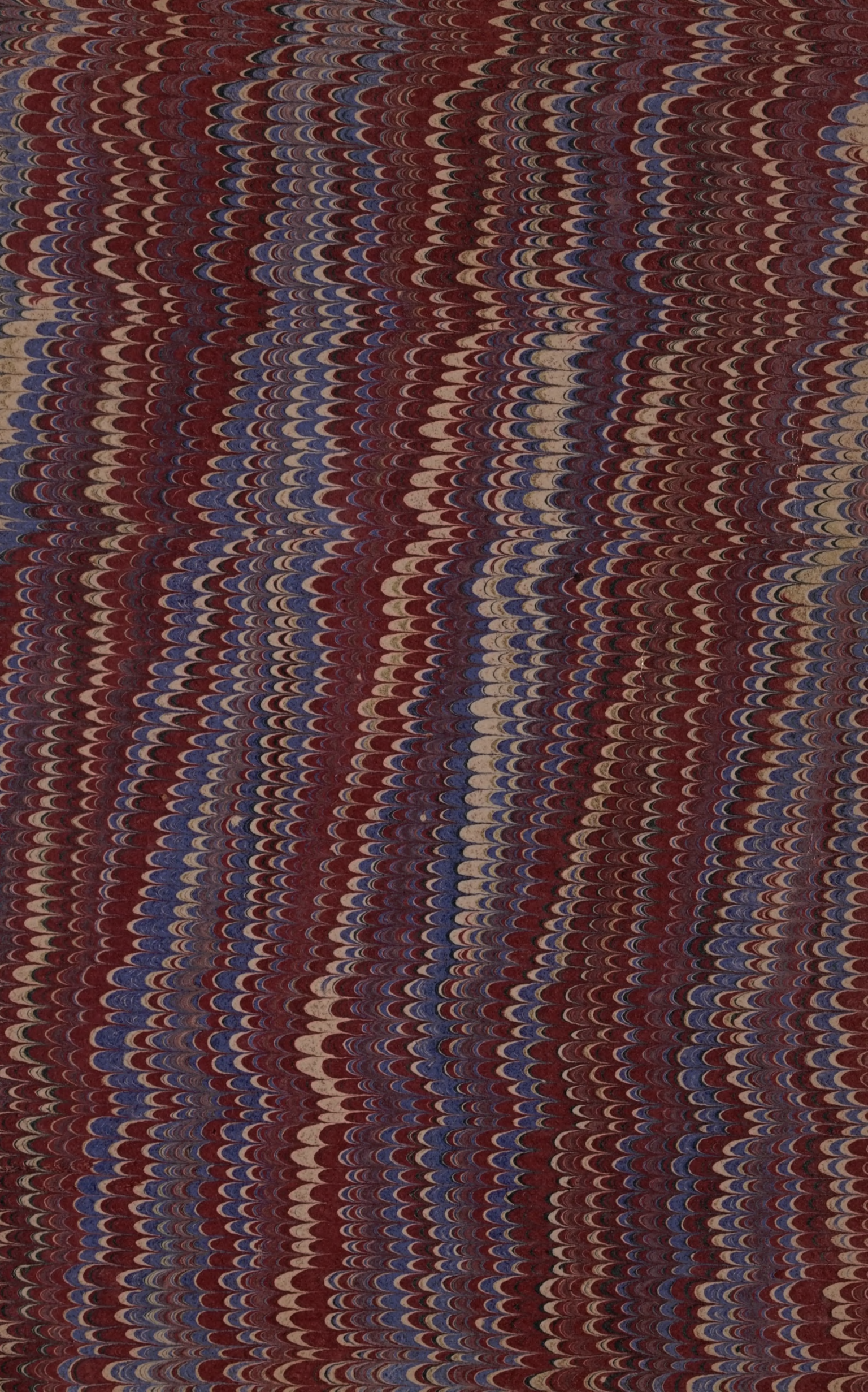
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





No. 695

Paul Arène

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THE GOLDEN COAT

A Novel

BY

PAUL ARÈNE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

MARY J. SAFFORD

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK

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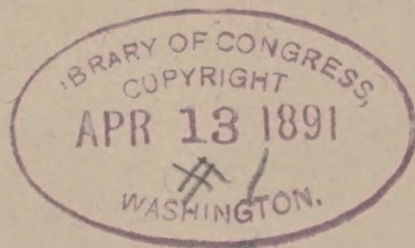
THE
GOLDEN GOAT

BY
Angèle
PAUL ARÈNE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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To Doctor JEAN MARTIN CHARCOT

In memory of our journey through the radiant land of Provence permit me, dear master and dear friend, to dedicate to you "THE GOLDEN GOAT." This little fantasy has nothing to do with nervous diseases; perhaps, for that very reason, it will please you

P. A.

THE GOLDEN GOAT

I

LETTER OF ADVICE

“LAUGH away, beloved friend and philosopher!”

I can see you, now, reading these lines in the seclusion of your luxurious study, cumbered with the spoils of the ages, where, like a Faust turned collector of curios, you pass through the crucible of modern science whatever mysteries are still left to mankind; that study where, amid ancient pictures and statues, enamels and tapestries, you consume your days, impelled, by some paradoxical and insatiate longing for truth, to reduce to profitless vapor the illusions of that very past whose image still remains your only satisfaction. Nay, I can imagine the smile of ironical compassion which, after a moment, will illumine your features, clear cut as the profile on one of your favorite coins.

The same man you have always known me to be, sceptical, cured of lofty enthusiasms, and disinclined

to hope, I am very earnestly occupied in the search for a treasure.

Yes; here in Provence, in a land all light and beautiful reality, cloudless horizons, luminous nights unhaunted by visions, I am having, broad awake, the most marvellous of dreams.

Folly! you are going to say. Keep calm. Your wisdom will soon perceive that, on the contrary, I must become mad to renounce my folly. For the treasure in question is a real and tangible one, which has been buried more than a thousand years—a genuine golden treasure, with nothing chimerical about it. Though comparable to the heaps of precious jewels and shimmering gems which dazzled popular imagination in the days of the Arabian Nights and the Caliphs, no Djinn guards it, and it will soon be mine.

How? Let me keep the secret another week.

Yet, with you in mind, I have jotted on paper, at first to occupy my leisure moments, afterwards to while away my impatience, an exact record of my sensations and adventures since the day we parted. You will receive the packet with this letter. A complete little romance, whose plot was woven solely by circumstances on which my will had no influence. The incident of the treasure comes in rather late. I will send you the sequel, and you will thus be able to share the emotions I am experiencing. Meanwhile, be indulgent to my chimera.

To prove that I am lucid, and that the mania for grandeur has not turned my brain, I assure you that I will soon laugh with you—nay, even more heartily

than you—over my discomfiture if, awakening at the last stroke of the pickaxe, I find, as in the fairy tales, instead of the hoped-for Colchis and Golconda, only a worm-eaten coffer, some pebbles and withered leaves.

II

ON THE JOURNEY

HERE I am, far away. Let us sum up what has happened.

The balance-sheet is a simple matter. Love affairs, or would-be love affairs, which have afforded me no happiness; eager toil, which has brought me no glory; friendships, yours excepted, which have all, in fading, left a chill in my heart, blended with the dull sense of rage roused by the humiliation of knowing that I am duped.

In short, I find myself again just where I started, minus faith in the future and that precious faculty of being deluded which alone renders life endurable. I recall to mind nothing save a fortune greatly diminished, without even being able to plead the excuse of any creditable folly.

A moment ago I felt this very distinctly in my cheerless hotel-chamber, while listening to the striking of the city clock.

Through an accident by no means singular, this clock, in the middle of the night, struck the hour of my birth, while, in the absence of a calendar, a birthday bouquet, a gift from a fair friend of too faithful

memory, told me, with cruel kindness, the number of my forty years. Had it not the same shrill, clear sound as the silver clock in the palace of Avignon, which struck only at the death of the Popes?

It seemed as if something in my own soul had just died.

What shall I resolve? To become a pessimist? Certainly not! I should be too much afraid of your searching banter.

After all, I am no longer rich; but I have enough left to live in comfort. I am no longer young, but there are still half a score of years between the man I see in yonder mirror and old age. It is too late to think of glory; but work, even without glory, has its lofty joys.

So, since I had not the genius to be a creator, perhaps some endeavor in the domain of science, a series of researches clearly defined and boldly pursued, will rid me of the disheartening doubts which have so often made me drop the tool from my hands midway in my task, while engaged in enterprises too purely imaginative not to seem, at certain moments, hollow and chimerical to the logician and coward chance has made of me.

After having searched and pondered, I have decided on a task suited to my courage and to my tastes.

You know—if I may be permitted to use an expression which you like and, indeed, I believe, partially invented—what a frantic *traditionist* I am.

An exile amid the environments of modern society,

I possess the infirmity of taking no interest in anything, unless I find the golden thread that unites it to the past. My feeling, moreover, may be defended; the future being closed to us, our sole means of intelligently prolonging our few years of existence lies in recalling the past to life.

You know, too—for you have often rallied me concerning a vague barbaric atavism, which, scoffing scholar, you attributed to me—you know what a weakness I have always had for the relics of Arabian civilization.

In this beautiful region where, above the ancient Ligurian tufa, so many peoples—Phœnicians, Phocians, Latins—have left the impress of their race and language, the last-comers alone, the Arabs, interest me.

The Greek girl, whose blue-gray eyes, veiled by long black lashes, evoke the vision of some peasant Cypris, the Roman whose proud patrician pallor you often admire, charm me far less than the lithe, slender Saracen, with scarlet lips and skin of amber tint, met at the turn of some path. And while others feel their hearts throb at the discovery of a fragment of an antique urn or the hand of a goddess yellowed by the sun, I was never so much moved as when one day in Nîmes, near Diana's Baths, whose masonry is vanishing under a mass of roses, I found among the ruins a carved sunken marble ceiling which African and Spanish invaders had artlessly added to the Ionian ornaments of the temple of the nymphs.

We welcomed as friends in our country the chivalrous silk-robed adventurers who, amid the harshness

of the Middle Ages, brought us the grace and the arts of the Orient. When the conquered Arabs re-embarked all Provence wept, as Blanche de Simiane mourned the departure of her handsome emir.

I began a work on this subject once—a work, alas, too quickly interrupted—and very opportunely find again a yellow memorandum-book, many of whose pages remained white. I shall revive these long-forgotten notes while finishing them. I shall begin again my endless rambles beneath a sky like that of the East, over these half-African rocks where grow the palm-tree and the Barbary fig, along these blue *calanques** so favorable to landing, these beaches in whose yellow sand the prows of the galleys sunk.

Happy the evening, and the day well spent, if I discover the name of some family or place whose consonance tells its origin, if I see in the sunset near the sea, on a hill-top, some white village with an ancient Saracen tower still retaining its battlements and the projecting stones of its moucharaby.

In this hospitable country, so indulgent to unskilful sportsmen, a gun on my shoulder will give me access to the peasants.

The unsalaried and somewhat indefinite mission your friendship obtained from the ministry will secure me a welcome from the local scholars, curés, and school-teachers, and enable me to search the old records of taxes, the land-registers, and residuum of the archives.

* Little creeks on the edge of the sea.

Then, after a month or two of this study in the open air, I hope to bring you back, if not important discoveries, at least a bronzed and vigorous friend in the place of the ultra-nervous Parisian whom you sent to renew body and brain in the sunshine.



III

THE LITTLE CAMARGUE

BUT, before beginning the campaign, before carrying all these fine projects into execution, I shall need a few days to collect my thoughts. Suppose I ask Skipper Ruf's hospitality. No doubt he is still alive. We were intimate for four years, and this is the way I made his acquaintance.

I was travelling along the coast from Marseilles to Nice, when one evening, not very far from here, in the neighborhood of Estérel, my attention was attracted by a rustic dwelling whose oddity interested me.

At the foot of a perpendicular rock stood one of the low cottages peculiar to the delta of the Rhone,

cottages built of beaten earth and reeds, whose white-washed, peaked roofs give them so characteristic an aspect.

Evidently the rock once plunged into the sea, but the heaping up of the sands swept there by the currents and the alluvium of a little river, whose sluggish waters, spread at the mouth into sleeping lagoons, have gradually converted the primitive bay into a stretch of salt ooze intersected here and there by splashes of water, where grew marine grasses, a few rushes, and tamarisks.

To find in the midst of Levantine Provence a miniature Camargue and its watchman's cottage had already surprised me; but my amazement reached its height when I perceived, mending nets before the door, a woman dressed in the Camarguen costume.

At my approach the husband came out. I greeted him with a Provençal "good-day." At the end of ten minutes we were the best friends in the world.

Ruf Ganteaume, more commonly called Skipper Ruf, was compromised in 1851 by having aided with his boat the escape of some rebellious soldiers, and got off cheaply, escaping Cayenne and Lambessa, by an imprisonment in the vicinity of Arles.

More lucky than others, since he could earn his living on the Rhone as a fisherman, he married, and after the amnesty returned to the country, bringing with him a beautiful girl named Tardif, one of the Tardifs of Fourques, whom he continued to call Tardive.

Ruf and Tardive had a son, whom they wanted to introduce to me.

"Ganteaume! Ganteaume!" they called. I expected a sturdy fellow already tanned by sun and sea. I saw emerge from a clump of tamarisks a shy, unkempt boy ten years old, holding by the legs a huge frog he had just captured. It was the heir, the bearer of the family name, Ganteaume.

I succeeded in taming Ganteaume, and lived with these worthy people a whole week. I promised that they should hear from me, but did not keep my word. Will they recognize me after the lapse of four years?

They *did* recognize me, and I have found everything in the same condition.

The cottage is always new, for Ruf puts on a fresh roof of reeds every autumn, and Tardive—Ganteaume carrying the pail of diluted lime—whitewashes the walls and roof every Saturday, according to Arlesian custom.

By way of change, there are a few more wrinkles in the old sailor's salt-incrusted face, and a few silver threads in Tardive's Grecian bandeaux.

Ganteaume, who has grown rapidly, is now a fine lad with fair curling locks, which will soon darken into brown. Ganteaume no longer catches frogs. When he isn't at sea he mounts Arlatan, a Camarguais stallion, white as chalk and quick as powder, which his father had brought, equipped with braided horse-hair harness, heavy stirrups, and high saddle, from Fourques, whither he had gone on business connected with a legacy.

I shall soon be settled. Ganteaume, who is to sleep

with his parents, gives up his room ; it seems as though it had been waiting for me.

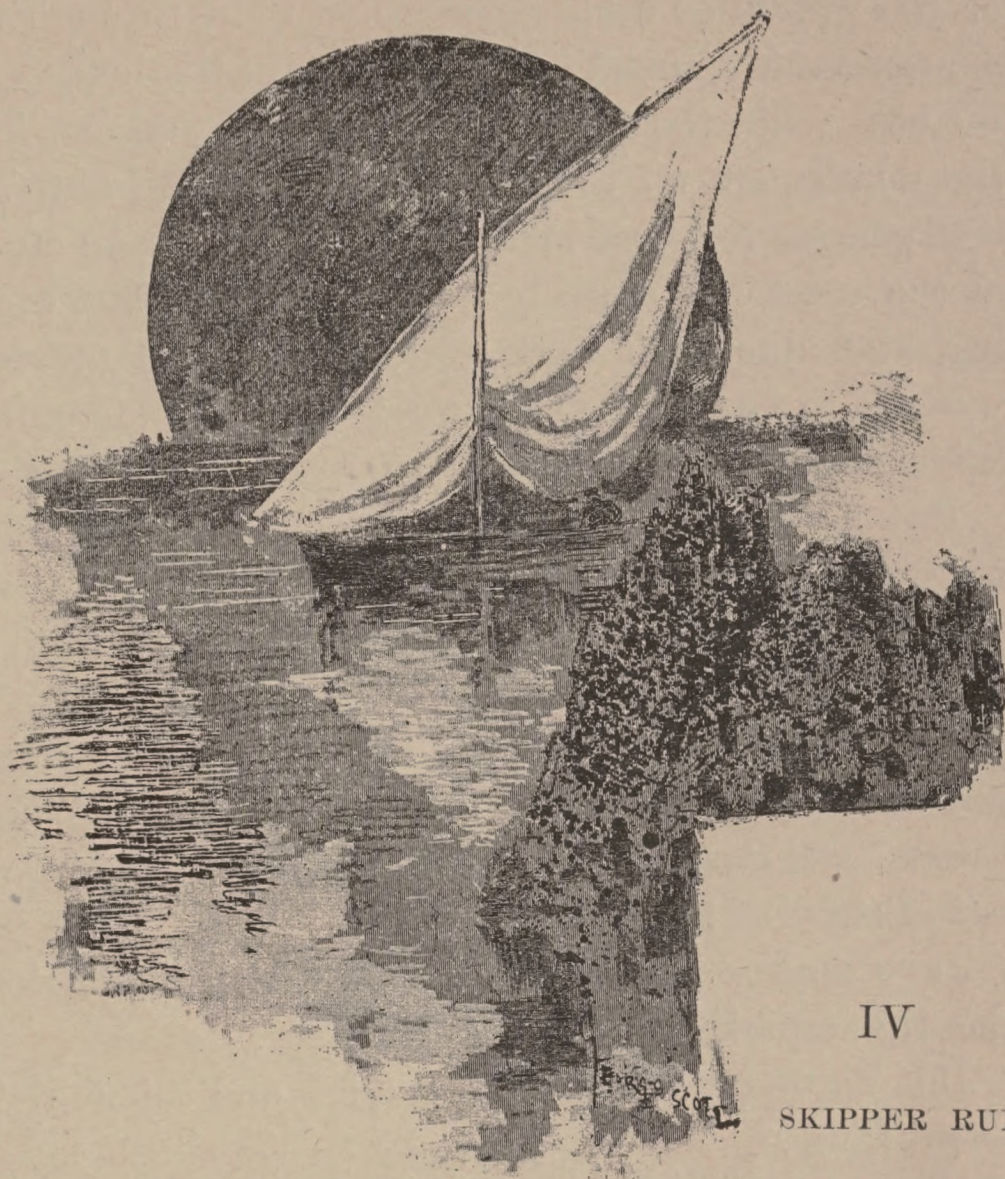
In honor of my arrival we dined off a bouillabaisse* made of fish caught by Ruf himself, and served, according to custom, on a piece of the bark of a cork-tree, slightly hollowed like a barbaric buckler. Each of us had for a plate half a pearl-shell, huge mussels these, with glints of silver and mahogany color, torn from the reefs in the gulf with great effort, by means of ropes knotted in running nooses lowered from the boats.

But for this thoroughly local detail of the plates and the dish I might have believed myself, with that horizon of flashing waves, with the lace-like foliage of the tamarisks outlined against the golden rays of the setting sun, and the tinkling bells of Arlatan ; but for these, I say, I might have believed myself in some secluded nook on the shore of Vaccarès, between the tower of Saint-Louis and the Saintes.

The surf was beating behind the dunes.

Tardive, beautiful in her modest pride, talked to me until midnight of her happiness ; Ganteaume was asleep ; Ruf smoked silently, and I admired the unconscious poet who, to secure his wife's love and happiness, had made a new native land for her on a bit of earth heaped up by the sea and the waters of a stream.

* A kind of fish-soup, cooked with onions, oil, and saffron, and served with slices of bread.



IV

SKIPPER RUF

SKIPPER RUF really supports himself by catching fish, which Tardive, mounted on Arlatan, goes to the city two or three times a week to sell. But his pride lies in being a coral-fisher.

One doesn't become a coral-fisher by mere wishing. The title is transmitted from father to son, and the members of the association, once admitted, swear to keep the secret.

The calling would seem to be as comfortless as that

of the "prentice cabin-boy." Ruf went through his apprenticeship, spending whole days in the bottom of the boat, while the crew, before casting a drag-net into the depths, are on the watch—in order to find the best places—for some marked rock, some *ensignadon** of the coast, and scarcely take breath until the evening, when, the day's work over and the boat moored, water is to be found, wood collected, and the bouillabaisse made.

Ruf had been initiated at sixteen, and even now, when the summer months came, Satan himself would not have prevented his joining his comrades' fleet at Cape d'Antibes. Mysterious expeditions these, in which provisions for two or three days were carried, and the boats made a pretence of sailing for Genoa, Corsica, and Sardinia, though in fact they were rarely out of sight of land.

June approaching, Skipper Ruf talks of starting, this time to take Ganteaume with him.

But Tardive wants to keep the lad, and this is their sole dispute.

Meanwhile Ruf has taken me for a mate. Every morning we put out to cast the *gangui*,† or stretch the *palangrottes*.‡

Yesterday the sea suddenly grew rough. The mistral was blowing, and we were obliged to tack on returning home.

Skipper Ruf silently held the tiller. Ganteaume,

* Promontory.

† Net dragged by a boat.

‡ Long fish-line, whose hook lies on the bottom.

running barefoot along the gunwale, attended entirely to the sails and ropes. And while the huge billows, sluggish and dull, unflecked by foam, rolled in the sunlight like molten lead, I, a useless passenger, amused myself by watching the barren coast, the hills rising gradually or sinking one behind the other as in tacking, we drew nearer to the shore, or stood out to sea.

A white spot glittered in the sunshine at the top of a cliff.

"Is that a village?" I asked.

"Puget," replied Ruf, without removing his pipe.

"Puget-Maure!" added Ganteaume.

The appearance of the place and its Saracenic name excited my scientific curiosity. I should have liked to obtain further particulars, but Skipper Ruf, vexed by a wrong turn of the helm, remained obstinately silent and, in spite of my impatience, I was forced to wait till his good-humor returned with the fair weather.

To-day the wind has risen.

Ruf and I sit talking on the *cagnard*, between two mounds of warm sand, where, on the days when the mistral blows, bits of mica glisten in the bright sunshine. Tardive is cooking down yonder, while Ganteaume runs along the shore, picking up, to show me, shells, cuttle-fish bones, pumice-stones, and tufts of algæ matted into brown balls, flung up amid flakes of foam by the angry sea.

* A sunny, sheltered spot.

Our conversations are usually on the subject of politics.

Ruf, solemn and closely shaven, with the bearing of a Latin, is more than ever in favor of the republic. Paris occupies much of his attention; he admires her great men, and having little to read, except a dilapidated old copy of *Plutarch*, imagines the city to be like Rome or Athens. In his hut is a plaster cast of Marianne, whom in all seriousness he calls the goddess, and which forms a pendant to a "Saint Martha conquering the Tarasque," brought by Tardive from Arles. On fête-days Tardive divides her flowers between Saint Martha and Marianne. Sometimes she rebels.

"Pshaw! what more can your republic give us? Haven't we a house, a good boat, a handsome son?"

To which Skipper Ruf replies:

"Everybody isn't like us. There are poor people in the great cities. Women don't understand; but the glory of the republic lies in improving the condition of the poor."

For once, however, we let politics alone. Still thinking of yesterday's voyage, I again referred to the village of Puget-Maure, so strangely located on its lofty perch, a distant glimpse of which I had caught.

"It's a queer idea to want to lose yourself in that paradise of adders. Puget is no longer even a village. I don't say it wasn't a century ago; but since that time everything good up yonder—land and people—has come down into the valley. The rock alone remains, with about twenty families, who pretend to

cultivate what the rain has left in the hollows. And *such* families! People with gypsy faces, who marry solely among themselves—from pride, they say, but it's from poverty, too. The whole ill-favored troop would starve to death if the women, who know something about witchcraft, did not go to the city every market-day to sell cheeses and mountain plants. The men poach, spite of the gendarmes, and powder doesn't cost them much."

Skipper Ruf has no suspicion that speaking ill of Puget-Maure only increases my desire to see it.

"You won't even find any road. There was one once, but the tempest changed it into a ravine, and the Puget people think themselves too high and mighty to turn road-makers."

My obstinacy, however, finally vanquished Ruf's objections. His Roman blood makes him instinctively hate the Bedouin races, and as an old sailor he regards a few hours' climbing among the mountains a venturesome expedition.

Ruf even recollected, very opportunely, that he had a friend up there.

"He's an ex-captain of a coaster, a capital fellow, but a little crack-brained, who took it into his head to go and live at Puget-Maure with his daughter. They occupy the castle. You'll see it. I wouldn't change mine for it."

Let Ruf heap scorn on Puget-Maure! The important point is that, as soon as fair weather returns, he is to take me in his boat to the *calanque* of Aygues-Sèches, into which the Rion falls after flow-

ing past Puget. Thence, it seems, by ascending the bed of the torrent I can reach the village with little difficulty. During the summer months, here as well as in Greece, torrents are the best roads.





V

THE CALANQUE

SKIPPER RUF has planned a surprise. While we go by sea, Tardive, mounted on Arlatan, with Ganteaume behind her, will carry my baggage by the road—there really is one—to Puget. Then Tardive will return alone, leaving Ganteaume with me a fortnight for company. This is the season Ruf feels the necessity of going coral-fishing, and Ganteaume is of no service to him.

Ruf, however, doesn't yet pardon Puget. He takes advantage of our being alone on the blue water to commence his diatribe anew. But not daring to attack in front he makes a circuit, and tells me—why

the deuce does he? —that the part of the gulf where we are sailing covers a city which disappeared nobody knows when, in the time of “the marble she-wolf!” When the sea is very calm, as it is to-day, columns and the walls of the circus can be distinctly seen. “An Arles ten fathoms below! Look!”

I do look, and can barely distinguish, amid huge sea-urchins wheeling on their prickles, and fish darting to and fro, glittering with metallic lustre, an uneven bottom, black with floating algæ.

Ruf, more fortunate, discovers all sorts of things. He talks of silver cups, bronze gods formerly dragged up in the fishermen’s nets, a jar so incrustated with shells that it looked like a fragment of rock, but filled with gold coins, which a child found flung on the sand the day after a storm. “Oh, if all the gold lying useless there could only be brought to light!” And the old republican, in whom the soul of the Gracchi lives again, created a new world in his imagination, a world where every one should be born rich, and all worthy folk should be happy.

Still suppose, some day, while casting the *gangui*, he, too, should haul up a little bit of the treasure. He would know how to use it as well as the next one. “You’ll see me a gentleman, Tardive a lady, and Ganteaume with shiny pumps.”

Take care; Skipper Ruf is making fun of himself, and when a Provençal does that it’s never long before he makes fun of somebody else.

Now it is the people of Puget-Maure who catch it. They, too, have a treasure, and that’s what makes

them so proud: a golden goat, which is seen at night feeding on the moss in the mountains. It runs so fast that nobody has ever been able to capture it. But hope keeps people alive, though it doesn't fatten them, and if the *Mouresq*, as they are called, are all thin, it's because, poor wretches, they've lived a long while on nothing but hope.

Having this time said all he had to say, Skipper Ruf began to laugh silently, with his teeth clinched upon the stem of his pipe. He was still laughing while we landed at the foot of the cliffs of Aygues-Sèches, and only stopped long enough to eat our farewell breakfast, prepared by Tardive, to which we added several dozen arapèdes,* dug with our knives from among the rocks.

* Shell-fish.



VI

IN THE VALLEY

SKIPPER RUF told me: "The valley runs just beneath the village; by going straight up you'll reach Puget in less than two hours."

A shepherd lad about fifteen years old, who, leaving his dog to watch his flock, was amusing himself by carving the odd nodosities of a carob-bough into little figures, confirmed these directions.

At first the walk was delightful along the bed of the stream, where, instead of water, tall flowers and gray grasses rippled under the sea-breeze.

Unluckily, neither Skipper Ruf nor the shepherd had informed me of one important fact—that, a little farther up, the tempest, a bad road-maker, had left on the way at least three-quarters of the pebbles and rocks its muddy flood should have swept to the strand. So henceforth my progress towards Puget-Maure was merely a series of perilous ascents of dry cascades, heaps of broken stones and rocks, polished to treacherous smoothness, and rendered still more slippery by a carpet of pine-needles.

How long did the two hours seem? I don't know. Time passes swiftly when a man is pursuing, without

rest or change, the absurd occupation of hanging by his feet to the rough places in the rocks while his hands clutch a clump of rock-rose, lentiscus, or branch of wild fig-tree, whose crushed leaves turn him giddy with their pungent odor.

Yet the sun, still fierce, was already low in the horizon when, at a bend in the way, Puget-Maure appeared. It seemed close by, within reach, just behind the last crag. But the crag crossed, another rose, then vanished, affording a second glimpse of the fantastic little village, which I ever fancied myself on the point of reaching, and which each time disappeared.

The landscape had changed. I first perceived this when, exhausted, I stretched myself flat on my back in the grass under a rock.

The white limestone cliffs on the shore of the gulf had vanished; but, as if some ancient volcano had poured forth its contents there, two porphyry crags towered aloft, glittering in countless sparkles under the red rays of the setting sun. An African vegetation clothed the glowing soil where these rays centred: tall aloes, cacti, and here and there a flayed martyr, the bleeding trunk of a cork-tree. The heat, which had grown intense, as usual towards the close of day, was making the bark crack, the resin ooze forth, and the shrill notes of the grasshoppers die away in a complaining crescendo.

It may be supposed that I fell asleep.

Yes; I fell asleep, and at once had a strange dream, long continued, during which I seemed to live years

and years. In quest of hidden treasures I traversed unknown regions, chimerical kingdoms; but the dream always brought me back to a secluded valley with ember-colored cliffs incrustated with carbuncles, where, tortured by burning thirst, I was pursuing the Golden Goat.

I was even on the point of catching it, for, two paces away, in a bush, I saw, distinctly, its malign eyes and shining horns.

A bleat close at hand and the faint tinkle of a little bell woke me. I opened my eyes, and at first believed that a hallucination was prolonging my dream.

But no; though the twilight, which had gathered during my long nap, was deepening every moment, I recognized the landscape I had so much admired in its sunlit splendor; and it was really a flesh-and-blood goat which, standing with its four feet drawn together, was watching me from the top of a steep rock. Its horns shone, its hoofs glittered, and there were fawn-colored shades in its fleece.

I moved forward to get a nearer view, but my advance startled it. With a leap it vanished for an instant, then appeared again on another rock.

On the spot it had left, the red stone where its hoofs had rested seemed coated with gold. I could not help smiling. Had Skipper Ruf made a mistake in his jesting? Had I, at my first entrance into this region, met the Golden Goat of the legend?

Meanwhile, the mischievous yellow brute, as the genuine Golden Goat would probably have done, seemed waiting for me and challenging pursuit.

I moved forward again. It started off anew, this time with horns set forward, dashing into a dense thicket of lentiscus, where it became entangled. I had already caught it, and was smoothing its rough, red skin, when, by a single effort, bursting through the obstructing boughs, it bounded away in freedom on the other side.

Something tinkled, doubtless its little bell, which had been unfastened, for I found under the bushes one of the bolts, shaped like a half-crescent, used by the shepherds to fasten the wooden collars the goats wear around their necks. I searched for the bell in vain. Being heavier, it must have rebounded and rolled into the hollow, where a small pool of water laughed among the stones.

The goat was far away, running at full speed. Stimulated by the sport, interested by the mystery, I began to run, too, without paying much heed to my goal.

We were now following a sort of road, and I was close to the animal when, by the rising moon, I saw it, with one last bound, vanish as if by a miracle into the very midst of a rock that seemed to close the valley.

At the same moment I heard, about fifty feet above me, the sound of voices and the tinkling of bells, and, raising my head, perceived amid the jagged outlines of roofs relieved against the sky the profiles of people talking together as they leaned on their elbows at the top of a terrace. What I had mistaken for a rock was probably a village.



“Holloa!” I shouted. “Is this Puget?”

“Yes; you need only follow the path, climb the steps, and pass through the gate.”

I followed a narrow path which ended, for better or worse, in steps hewn from the rock, and passed

under a low archway, doorless, but still surmounted by worn armorial bearings. An old woman showed me the way to the inn, where, despite Skipper Ruf's gloomy predictions, I fell asleep—after a supper which hunger made delicious—in a white bed standing in the middle of a little room whiter still, whose fantastic ogives, up to the moment when slumber closed my eyelids, created the illusion of a rustic, humble Alhambra.

VII

THE GOLDEN GOAT

I HAD forgotten the goat. Ganteaume reminded me of it in the morning.

Arriving late on Arlatan, he had spent the night—Tardive having returned at once—under the roof of the ex-captain of whom Ruf spoke yesterday.

Ganteaume has brought my valise.

While putting it on the table he discovered a bit of red rock, glittering with bright specks, which I had picked up mechanically on the spot where the goat had appeared. He went into raptures over it, and asked whether all these specks were real gold.

The bolt, too, interested him. Usually these bolts are of wood, shaped by a knife, but he made me notice that this one was ivory.

Then he left me to go and get my books. When alone, I began to think.

Before hearing Skipper Ruf's stories I had known his legend, and in every corner of Provence I had encountered the Golden Goat.

At Baux, wandering on moonlit nights through the deserted palaces and along the edge of precipices; near Arles at Cordes, around the mysterious cavern hewn from the rock in the shape of a sword; near Vallauris,

in the Val d' Or, on the table-land strewn with strange ruins called Cordes or Cordoue, whence there is so beautiful a view beyond the orange-groves which girdle the Golfe Juan, to the isles of Lérins, Saint Marguerite, Saint Honnorat, shining white amid the sea.

Everywhere the legend was associated with memories of the Saracenic occupation, and everywhere the salient point was a goat with golden fleece, living in a grotto full of countless wealth, and bringing death to the man bold enough to follow or to seize it.

Thus my half delusion was explained in the simplest way in the world.

The heat under the pine-trees was overwhelming, and with my brain dulled by Skipper Ruf's garrulity it is not surprising that, having fallen asleep, I should have dreamed of treasures, and, on waking, should have mistaken for the Golden Goat the first one that came along.

Reddish goats are not rare. I remember having seen a whole flock of them in Naples, at the foot of Virgil's tomb.

If my goat's hoofs glittered like diamonds, no doubt it was because it had polished them by running over the dry grass and among the broken stones. If its horns shone, too, it was because the animal liked to rummage, head down, among the hard branches of the myrtle and lentiscus thickets. As to marks left by its hoofs, I was geologist enough to perceive, by merely examining the piece of rock Ganteaume so greatly admired, that it was nothing but a fragment of red porphyry incrustated with grains of mica.

The bolt, however, did puzzle me. I showed it to the innkeeper.

"That," he said, putting on a very solemn air, "is the bolt of a bell; but though I've watched flocks in my day I never saw one like it. In the first place, if I'm not mistaken, it's made of fine ivory. And then just notice these designs; shepherds nowadays can't do such work. It must be as old as the roads. The man who made the bolt doubtless died long ago, and the animal that wore it, too."

I thought it useless to undeceive the landlord by telling him that the goat which lost the bolt was still alive, and very much alive. Whether the bolt is old or not, a bit of ivory might at any time fall by chance into the hands of a shepherd, who amused himself by carving it.

Yet it's none the less true that, if the shepherd in question—if any shepherd—or if Gantéaume, while finding this curiosity, had seen, as I did, a goat with reddish hair dart away in the dazzling light of the setting sun—if he had noticed, as I did, spots which shone with metallic lustre on the stones its hoofs had brushed, nothing would have shaken his belief that the Golden Goat had actually appeared to him.

I should have liked to be that shepherd.

Every evening, agitated by fear and hope, I would have returned to the valley to watch for it, to track it, spite of perils and precipices, through the wild scenes it haunts, to the treasure, to the grotto. The artless illusion—at least for a few hours, a few months—would have brightened my life.

VIII

A SEAFARING BACCHUS

GANTEAUME not returning, I resolved to visit the village.

A veritable pirate's nest is this Puget, perched high aloft on its crag, whence one has a distant view of the sea through the lance-shaped leaves of the Barbary vegetation.

There are no ramparts; the houses take the place of these, forming a line along the edge of the precipice, and pierced at long intervals by narrow windows which, in case of need, would serve for loop-holes.

I intended to make the whole circuit of the town, and then go down to the valley through which I passed yesterday. I recognized the old door by which I had entered.

Within were streets like stairs — long, dark, cool, covered passages — and then, with its fountain and lavatory, a little square surrounded by white arcades. Many of the houses were empty, and open to the four winds of heaven. Grass was growing in them, sweet marjoram perfumed the chinks of the broken ceilings; and between the windows, which had neither

glass nor shutters, and the roofs, whose cracks afforded glimpses of the blue sky, a flock of swallows flitted to and fro.

What if I were to venture into the labyrinth? I tried, attracted by its picturesque charm, but was soon forced to retreat.

Men and women, sitting on the thresholds, gazed at me without resentment, it is true, but with evident astonishment. These were the half savages Skipper Ruf had described. Yet they returned my salute when I bowed to them. But the street is theirs. I felt myself an intruder in their home, and hurried back to the little square.

Ganteaume was there. He had been looking for me "more than two hours," he added, like the true Southern exaggerator he has already become.

Some one was waiting for me, it appeared—Monsieur Hounorat Gazan, Skipper Ruf's friend, the ex-captain.

Tardive had told him about me, and he had come to pay the first call.

So, Ganteaume always in front, I went back to the inn and climbed its cold stone steps, polished to the semblance of green marble by the shoes of the peasants and the slides of the village lads; though I first stopped to admire what had escaped my notice this morning—the amazing sign, "The Seafaring Bacchus," representing a chubby child, garlanded with grapes, seated astride of a cask against which the waves were furiously beating.

Monsieur Hounorat really was waiting for me, and

very placidly, over a bottle of muscat wine, in the great hall of the Bacchus, now as dark as an Arabian coffee-house, the blinds having been shut to keep out the sun and the flies.

I groped my way to shake hands with him, but my eyes gradually became accustomed to the dim light, and our acquaintanceship, thanks to the muscat, was made in a trice.

Monsieur Honnorat, Gazan Honnorat, is the Mayor of Puget. In this character he has charge of the archives—that is, he keeps the key of an old box that has been banished to the garret.

“If you are not afraid of dust and rats, your visit will be very timely. Rummaging among the old papers will greatly benefit them. Saladine, my house-keeper, is growing old, and neglects them. They must need dusting sorely.”

In reality, Monsieur Honnorat is more scholarly than he wishes to show. As I explain my plans, he owns that he himself formerly undertook and then abandoned a work similar to the one I have in view: the monograph of Puget-Maure; so-called, he tells me, because, thanks to its natural fortifications, the Saracens held out there even after the great defeat and the destruction of Fraxinet.

“It is very remarkable, and you should have—”

“Yes, I should have gone on with it. But how can it be helped? The natives of Provence—those who live here especially—are all alike. Up to fifty, quick as powder! Then indolence overtakes us, we grow fat, and become Turks.”

Monsieur Honnorat gave me some particulars.

Too far away from the sea to fly, the inhabitants of Puget-Maure had succeeded in making themselves respected. Somewhat late, towards the fifteenth century, they were converted, after a fashion, and mingled with the people in the vicinity. But the race retained some characteristic customs. And Monsieur Honnorat mentioned certain families: Quitran, Goiran, Roustan, Autran. "All names ending in *an*," he added, "reveal the Arabic origin. We have it, too; we are called Gazan; and if your eyes are good you will distinguish above our gate-way a fragment of an escutcheon whose design is evidently Moorish."

I have not had time to test the value of worthy Monsieur Honnorat's ethnographical and linguistic attainments. At all events, these thin, brown-skinned peasants, so uncivilized of aspect in their garments of undyed wool, might easily pass for pirates. Monsieur Honnorat himself, with his big nose, his unruffled, dignified manner, the fatalistic sentiments which, when he removes his pipe, roll over his thick beard—a little less heavy around his mouth and ears—appears for the moment a true follower of the prophet.

But the muscat is finished. Monsieur Honnorat insists on showing me his castle, upon presenting me to his daughter. He is a widower, it seems, and has a charming daughter. So off we go towards the castle towering at one corner of the square, a castle which would be just like all the other houses, were it not for a tolerably handsome portal, feudal in appearance, and a tower, once a stronghold, now a dove-cot,

whose walls on three sides have been turned by the sun to the color of a crust, while the fourth one, facing the sea, is crumbling under the influence of the salt air.

IX

WHITE BUTTERFLIES



"NORETTE! Norette!" shouted Monsieur Honnorat in the deep tones of an old sailor, as he stood at the foot of the tower; "Norette!" But Norette did not answer.

"Oh, you can call till to-morrow," interrupted an angry voice. "Mademoiselle went out of the bake-house just as soon as the *fougasse* was done, leaving me alone to attend to everything. Now she's up under the roof, looking after her silk-worm eggs; and when Mademoiselle is looking after her silk-worm eggs she wouldn't heed the thunder of the Eternal Father himself."

The person who thus joined in the conversation uninvited, according to the patriarchal custom of Provence, was a tall, thin, dried-up woman in whom, —before Monsieur Honnorat said, “Set down your loaves, Saladine; you can scold more comfortably!”—I had already recognized the loyal yet tyrannical house-keeper of the Gazan family.

On her head, classically crowned with the little round cushion of the caryatides, she balanced a waiter filled with steaming bread, and under one arm, wrapped in a napkin, was one of the thin cakes, made of dough, which housewives cook before the open fire, constantly pricking it with the tips of their fingers and moistening it with oil.

“Here is something we ought to have had just now to help down the muscat,” sighed Monsieur Honnorat. “We’ll remember it another time; meanwhile, let us have a taste.”

I broke off a corner, and, without stretching the truth, pronounced the *fougasse* delicious. Monsieur Honnorat expressed no opinion.

“Perhaps the oil was scanted?” Impudent words, which instantly opened the floodgates of Saladine’s wrath.

“The oil scanted? The idea of saying so! A whole bottle was used, a bottle of virgin oil, every drop worth its weight in gold. Only we found five or six women cooking there, and Mademoiselle Norette, as usual, insisted on moistening their cakes. It’s a waste, a ruinous waste! Ah, when poor Madame Gazan was alive! . . .”

Monsieur Honnorat took me by the arm.

"I know Saladine; she'll keep on scolding an hour. Let's escape to the roofs. You shall see the silk-worm egg-culture; it is interesting."

A dark staircase, a dark landing, then a door flung open, and, in the bright square of the door-way, a whirl of silver and gold.

"Mademoiselle Gazan, Skipper Ruf's friend."

I bow by instinct, and, the first surprise over, look about me to get a clear understanding of my surroundings. We are in the garret—a garret where the sun shines into every corner. The gold is the garlands of cocoons suspended from transverse bars, so close together that they form hangings; the silver, white butterflies resting on the cocoons.

Cautiously, bending our heads to avoid knocking against anything, we enter the sanctuary, following Mademoiselle Norette and Ganteaume, who, since yesterday, has constituted himself her page.

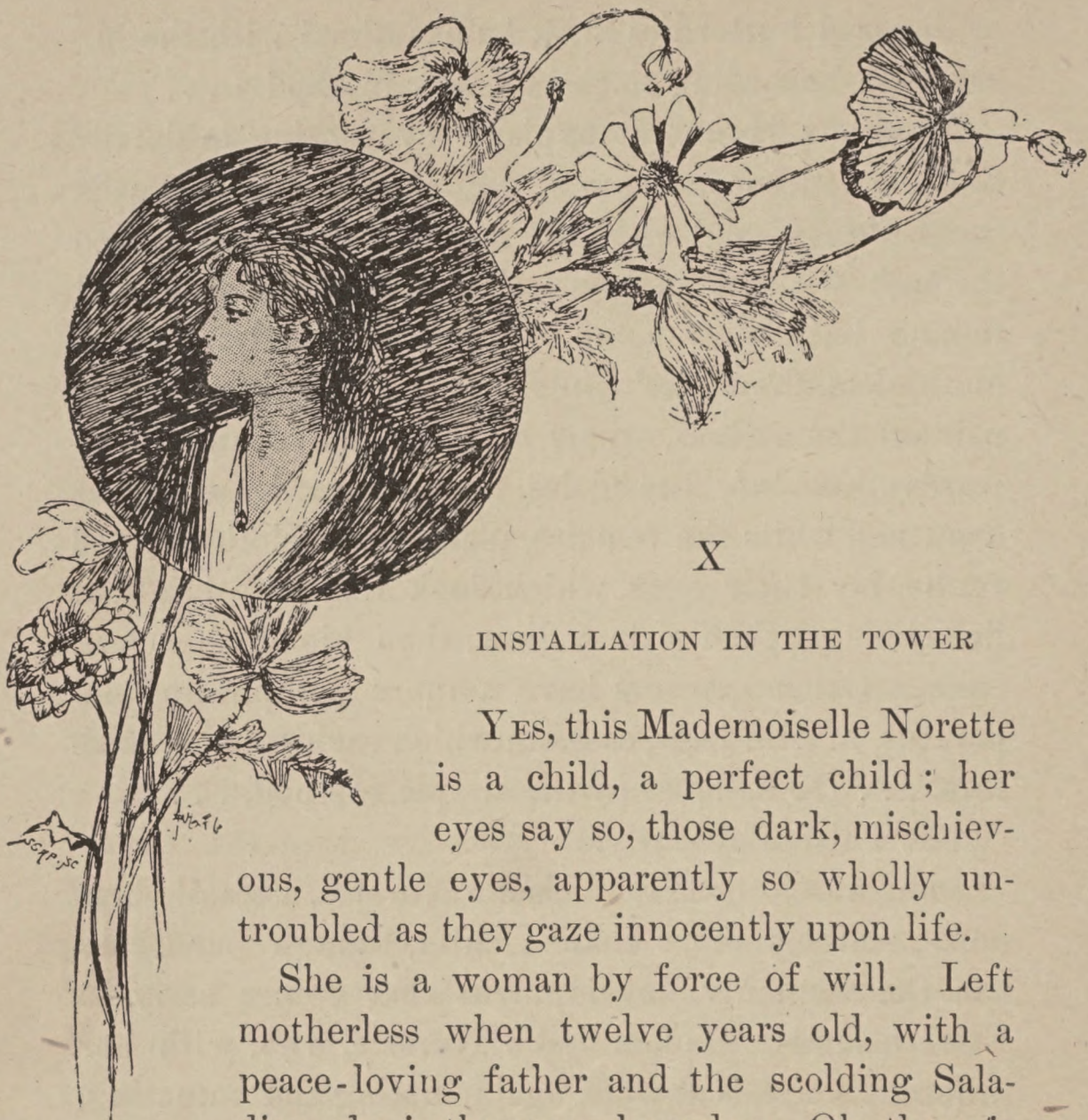
Monsieur Honnorat tells me that Mademoiselle Norette, finding silk very low, and eggs, on the contrary, very high, thought of devoting her time exclusively to dealing in eggs. She has carried on the business successfully for two years. The money she makes is her own. Raising silk-worms has always been regarded in well-to-do middle-class families as an aristocratic business, which can be pursued without loss of caste. Puget-Maure eggs are in demand, for fine ones cannot be had everywhere. The care of them requires attention and conscientiousness. The cocoons must be selected with great caution; doubtful

or diseased butterflies must be examined with the microscope, according to the Pasteur method. . . .

Monsieur Honnorat explains everything in detail: the selected cocoons are strung in chaplets—he calls them *filanes*—and when the needle is delicately passed through without injuring the cocoon, the male and female butterflies come out. The females remain motionless, the males' wings and bodies quiver. Some pair off themselves, others must be mated and afterwards *unmated*; the males, henceforward useless, are drowned, while the females, placed on a cloth-covered frame, lay their eggs, which look like tiny beads, at first hueless, then pale yellow, then violet, then lead color. Other growers have a more complicated apparatus, muslin bags, cases in which each color is separate. . . . He believes in the simple method. . . .

But I listen absently.

I am watching Mademoiselle Norette, a fragile brunette, scarcely more than a child, though her figure has the womanly development that comes early in Eastern lands; Mademoiselle Norette, who, with her innocent smile, is at work again, mating and unmating, with her slender, amber-tinted fingers the female butterflies, whose hearts are visibly expanding, while the males are fluttering their demonstrations of attraction.



X

INSTALLATION IN THE TOWER

YES, this Mademoiselle Norette is a child, a perfect child; her eyes say so, those dark, mischievous, gentle eyes, apparently so wholly untroubled as they gaze innocently upon life.

She is a woman by force of will. Left motherless when twelve years old, with a peace-loving father and the scolding Saladine, she is the one who rules. Oh, there is no appearance of giving orders; only, spite of the tyrannical airs he puts on, Monsieur Honnorat does nothing except what she approves, and, spite of her fits of temper and shrill screeches, Saladine herself obeys her.

Mademoiselle Norette must have wished me to lodge in the castle, for Monsieur Honnorat, by dint of entreaties, induced me to do so, and this morning Saladine is arranging my quarters.

It seems that The Seafaring Bacchus—where my room, adjoining the public one, was always filled, through the holes in the partition, with the noise of gamesters and the buzzing of flies—wasn't a suitable place for me.

“Besides,” said Monsieur Honnorat, “what would people think if they knew I had let Skipper Ruf's son and friend stay at the tavern, as if they were peddlers or strolling actors.”

So I have left The Seafaring Bacchus, though I shall continue to take my meals there with Ganteaume.

Monsieur Honnorat offers us a whole story of his tower.

There is nothing to shock Puget in this arrangement. Living under the same roof, even when that roof shelters a young girl, does not imply intimacy. Houses often have three or four owners; each one occupies his own corner without troubling himself about his neighbor, and, in case of a lawsuit, they don't always recognize one another easily in the entanglement of the stories.

The room set apart for my use is, perhaps, a little high up, but delightful, and seems as though it had been made for me.

The archives are above, in a sort of garret, which will be very convenient for my investigations, and that no time may be lost, I have spent a whole delicious afternoon in shaking these yellow papers and shrivelled parchments, whence floats the dust of ages, while through the floor rises the noise of Saladine and Norette moving the furniture—one scolding, the other

laughing. Already I have come upon several title-deeds, which I shall reserve for future study, and a court-roll of the year 1400, where names of places, sacrilegiously misspelled by our own clerks in the land-survey office, appear in their original verity, under the garb of the Provençal peasant dialect or of barbarous Latin.

Besides the garret, there is the terrace—a terrace built in the fashion of the country, bordered with a high stone parapet, which becomes lower as it follows the slope of the tiled roof, so that, at the extreme end, one might lean one's elbows on it to get a view of the landscape, while on the three other sides there is always a cool, shady corner to be found in the summer, a sunny one in the winter. Perched aloft like a lookout, I could see the white sail of Skipper Ruf's craft passing in the distance.

Below the tower ripples a brook fed by invisible springs filtering through the ground at the foot of the rocks. But, a hundred yards away, the water ceases to glitter in the stony bed of the valley, suddenly exhausted by the drain made upon it by the owners of numberless little gardens, whose stone-walls topple along the side of the cliff.

Here one can become very thoroughly acquainted, topographically, with the history of Puget-Maure.

In former days, before the land was cleared and cultivated, the waters of the springs must have flowed in an abundant stream to the sea; and the *calanque* of Aygues-Sèches then afforded the sailors a supply of water.

Had the Phœnicians, and, in later times, the Greeks, a port there? The Saracens undoubtedly knew the coast and sheltered their light vessels in it. It was only later that they climbed the hills and settled in Puget, which remains just as they built it, with its streets like staircases, where the leaning houses would kiss one another if, here and there, an arch or vaulted passage did not interpose to maintain good order. Does any dim remembrance of their origin linger in the minds of yonder men down below who, their work completed, sit in front of the old house they occupy together, gazing steadily, in the hope of something indescribable which ought to come, at the sea, the blue road to their forgotten native land?

A "Monsieur! I say! Monsieur!" interrupts my archæological reflections.

Saladine, anxious and busy, is coming towards me, turning to see if any one is following her.

What is the cause of these airs of mystery, and what can Saladine want from me?

XI

THE BOLT AND THE BELL



It seems that while arranging the small quantity of luggage brought from The Seafaring Bacchus by Ganteaume, Mademoiselle Norette showed great astonishment on discovering among my books and papers the famous ivory bolt.

She questioned Ganteaume, who could tell her nothing, except that the bolt belonged to me. Now she desired to know how

it came into my hands.

I told Saladine the story of my meeting the marvelous yellow goat which made me run the whole length of the valley three days before, on the very evening of my arrival.

“Then you met Jeanne!”

“Jeanne?”

“Yes, Misé Jano, Mademoiselle Norette’s goat, our goat, which that very day—she’s so mischievous—

pulled out with her horns the stake to which she was tied in the meadow, and came back with her collar awry, just ready to drop off, the rope trailing, and the bolt and bell lost. You have found the bolt, but the bell must be had. Mademoiselle Norette has been crying about it, and Monsieur Honnorat would be fairly sick if he knew it was missing. A silver bell, monsieur, which has been in the Gazan family hundreds and hundreds of years! If you could remember the place! Perhaps it might be found. . . .”

Then Mademoiselle Norette, who was awaiting the result of the embassy on the stairs, timidly advanced.

“Above all, monsieur, pray don’t let my father know anything about it.”

Night was falling. I promised to go to the valley at daybreak to try to recognize the thicket through which the goat was passing when, in the dusk, I fancied I heard something tinkle.

And I did go to the valley this morning. Strange prelude to my scientific labors, this search for a stray bell.

Luckily the red porphyry rock on which the goat stood for a moment will serve for a landmark.

Here is the thicket, the place where the bolt dropped, and, at the foot of a rocky slope, polished by the tramping of the peasants and their flocks, lies the pool of water into which the bell must have rolled.

Something white was shimmering at the bottom; it was the bell.

I drew it out, dripping, and instantly understood

why Monsieur Honnorat and Mademoiselle Norette attached so much importance to its possession.

Bordering the extreme edge, curiously wrought in the Saracenic taste, ran a sort of arabesque which I at first supposed to be merely an ornamental device, but which, on a closer examination, appeared to form a strange inscription in very ancient Greek, blended with Kufic characters.

The whole incident seemed to enter the framework of my researches with remarkable aptness.

I was thinking of copying the inscription and keeping it to decipher at my leisure—for I have some knowledge of cryptography—when Mademoiselle Norette came running up. Her yellow goat, just like any other, and no whit extraordinary in broad daylight, followed her.

Mademoiselle Norette took the bell, and, laughing and thanking me, hung it round Misé Jano's neck. The animal instantly set off at a run in front of its mistress towards the village.

Monsieur Honnorat was grumbling when we returned.

"Is it sensible to trust that silver bell to the goat, Norette? You may lose it some day."

"You see that it isn't lost, papa."

"True! But people have seen it, and that always makes them talk."

"I like to make people talk," said Norette, in her gentle but resolute voice.

XII

THE BASKET OF WISHES

THIS adventure has created a species of mutual understanding between Mademoiselle Norette and myself.

Mademoiselle Norette, accompanied by Ganteaume, who never goes more than a step away from her, showed me from top to bottom, first my tower, whose origin is evidently pure Saracenic, and then the castle proper, a more curious though less ancient structure.

A little Renaissance dwelling, but built according to the plan of Arab houses, so that one feels surprised, as though by an anachronism, at discovering on the ceiling of the staircase, barely distinguishable under the layers of whitewash, several bas-reliefs inspired by the *Iliad*: an Agamemnon, wearing the cap of King Francis; a lady who, but for the name Briseis, written on a streamer, I should take for Diane de Poitiers.

On the other hand, the court-yard has retained the purest Oriental character, visible in its low-curved well, its niches hollowed in the wall to serve for shelves, the double row of galleries by which the rooms are lighted, without windows on the street, and

the huge vine, centuries old, which, growing in a corner of the paved yard, covers it almost entirely with its crooked black arms and grape-laden branches, amid which at noon flocks of pigeons coo.

The interior of the dwelling is a perfect museum.

Without counting several morose-featured ancestral portraits, there are hangings whose rich colors mark them products of Smyrna and Aleppo, damascened weapons, lamps of peculiar form, stools, tables, mirrors inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and furniture a hundred years old, the whole forming the strangest medley imaginable.

Moreover, there is nothing to suggest the cult of the curio, unknown, thank Heaven! on these heights, but rather a patriarchal atmosphere, the impress left by several generations.

Mademoiselle Norette explains that the members of the Gazan family have always been great travellers.

Then she opens a small iron-bound oak coffer and shows me pearl and coral necklaces, whose clasps are usually either a Greek coin or some ancient carved stone, chaplets of sequins, heavy silver bracelets, gorgets of refined yet barbaric style, all sorts of ornaments brought from far distant lands to grandmothers and great-grandmothers whose names she repeats.

I ask permission to see the bell. Mademoiselle Norette is troubled. It appears that she no longer has it, but has returned it to her father, who prizes it highly as a memento.

"Above all, don't let him know what happened; never tell him that you have had it in your hands."

And to change a conversation which is embarrassing to her, she takes from the very bottom of the chest a small basket made of woven willow. What new riches does it contain under the old satin square so carefully enwrapping it?

An egg, a pinch of salt, a bit of brown bread, and a little stick with a tuft of wool at the end.

"These are the wishes!" Norette says.

"The wishes?"

"Yes. The wishes and gifts brought to me in my cradle when I was a day old."

"Just as they were in the time of the fairies?"

"Exactly. Only, the fairies having died long ago,



four old women, neighbors or friends, usually take their places, mindful of customs, which, whenever a girl is born, allot to them this important mission. The idea occurs to them suddenly at the bake-house, the washing-place, while gossiping about rain and fair weather. As soon as the matter is decided, they don their Sunday dresses, put on freshly ironed caps, and make their appearance. The stick, which represents a distaff, is to make the little girl, when she grows up, active and industrious; the salt is to keep her pure; the bread, to render her as good as good bread. . . ."

"And the egg?" asked Ganteaume. "What's the use of the egg?"

"The egg," Norette answered, with the utmost seriousness, "is to insure her a happy marriage and plenty of children."



XIII

GREAT-UNCLE IMBERT'S TURBAN

BUT dinner must be ready, and Monsieur Honnorat is calling us.

I am presented to the curé, Abbé Sèbe, a little man as black as a mole, who has been invited in my honor.

He says very little, perhaps from timidity, perhaps, too, because all the attention of which the holy man is capable is monopolized by a hare-ragout, which really does give one a high opinion of Saladine's culinary talents.

Monsieur Honnorat, on the contrary, is very talkative. With his napkin tucked under his chin, he tells

us the history of his ancestors, the Gazans, who were all sailors or physicians. And I imagine them, I can fairly see them: some scholars like Averroës and Avicenna, others expending at sea, or in caravans, the rage for adventure latent in their blood.

Monsieur Honnorat himself partook of both tendencies. The first intention was that he should study medicine, but travel tempted him.

He relates his voyages to the Levant, mentions *les Échelles*, Corfu, Negropont, Famagosta, all sorts of names, which, uttered by him, instantly conjure up visions of cities with domes and minarets, whose wharves are cumbered with bales, and thronged with negroes eating watermelons amid odors of melting tar and spices.

Mademoiselle Norette sometimes interrupts him with the question: "Is that really true, papa?" which suddenly throws the worthy man into comical fits of half-feigned anger.

This is not surprising. The Orientals were always famous story-tellers, and perhaps it may be a reflection of the *Arabian Nights* that so picturesquely colors southern imaginations.

The person under discussion now is great Great-uncle Imbert, Imbert-Pacha as he is called, who, having gone as cabin-boy at the age of twelve, had sailed over almost every sea in days when mariners had nothing but sailing-vessels, and there was really some credit in navigating.

After a number of fortunes had been made and speedily lost, Great-uncle Imbert, the future Imbert-

Pacha, found himself one day a mere common sailor in a wealthy Arabian seaport.

The vessel, safely moored, was taking in her cargo, while the crew were scattered in the coffee-houses of the town. Great-uncle Imbert, whose purse was empty, tried to kill the time by strolling along the wharf.

It was a splendid quay—long, broad, and paved with white marble, whose reflection fairly scorched the eyes.

Some one passed by, undoubtedly a grandee in that country, for he was robed in silk, covered with jewels, and trailed a pearl-embroidered mantle, while two beautiful female slaves walked one on each side, shielding him with a parasol and fanning him.

Great-uncle Imbert mechanically began to follow, walking in his shadow, the only shade on the wharf, and saying to himself: "My poor Imbert, how bored you are! But, bless my heart! here's somebody who doesn't seem to be."

Suddenly the man with the two slaves drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and, passing it over his face, exclaimed:

*"Couquin de Diou, qunto calur!"** †

Amazed at hearing a Turk complain of the heat in the Marseilles dialect, Great-uncle Imbert taps him on the shoulder:

"Quant voles juga que sies Prouvençau." †

* Oh, Lord! how hot it is!

† If I shouldn't think you were from Provence.

Was he a native of Provence? Just think; a cousin, a Gazan belonging to the older branch of the family, who had disappeared, and was now like a prince or king in that region.

"It was at that very time," Monsieur Honnorat concludes, "that Great-uncle Imbert took the turban for several years."

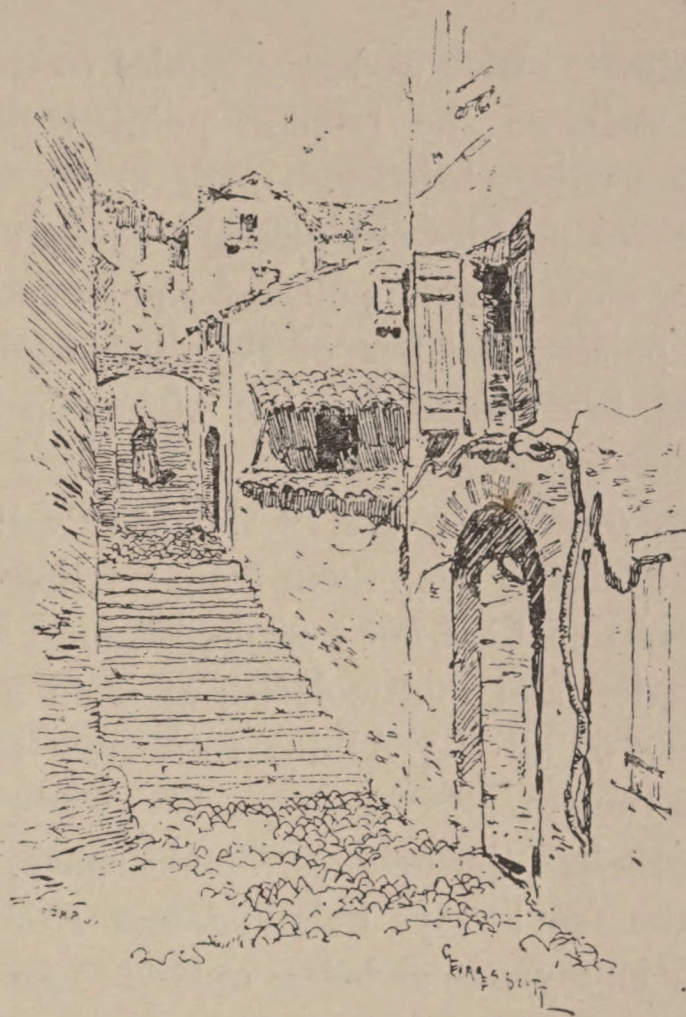
"Took the turban?" interrupted the abbé.

"Yes, he took the turban, became a Turk. Man needs religion, and all religions are good. Besides, we still have his turban. Ganteaume, fetch the stool and get down Grand-uncle Imbert's turban from the closet yonder."

Ganteaume took down the turban, a huge yellow one, and tried it on.

"All religions are good," Monsieur Honnorat persists; "especially the Mussulman one. Allah! Allah!"

It was a comical and charming picture: Monsieur Honnorat positive; the abbé not daring to show his irritation; Saladine, scandalized, raising her long, thin arms towards heaven; and Norette laughing till she cried.



XIV

THE DONKEY'S PASSAGE

IN this queer house—which, thanks to Norette, is almost comfortable, its rooms not wholly destitute of carpets, and its brick steps and landings polished—there is one thing that does surprise me: the corridor.

To harmonize with the elegance of the vaulted ceiling it should have, however worn, some heraldic flagging of beautiful blue-and-white faience like that manufactured at Moustiers or Varages.

But no, the corridor is paved; it is a continuation

of the street, which savagely carries to the very foot of the staircase the terrible pointed pebbles with which the village bristles.

Yet these pebbles are pleasant enough to see now that they have become polished and smooth as marble by the persistent labor of Saladine, whose constant sweeping has earned her the nickname of Scratch-pebble.

"*Dàu, Grato-caillàu ?*" * the boys call after her, when she tries to keep them from stealing her figs.

I regret that I am not a geologist, for I should have there, varied and multicolored, as if in a glass-case, specimens of all the Alpine rocks our torrents roll down to the sea.

Nevertheless, the pebbles remain sharp. "Enough to kill the feet!" says Saladine, and Norette ill conceals her annoyance at being unable to go to her door in slippers.

I have questioned Mademoiselle Norette about it.

"It is the Donkey's Passage," she replied, and said no more, but her dark eyes, usually somewhat sleepy in their expression, kindled with sudden wrath.

Monsieur Honnorat, who is calmer, explained the matter.

With the mania for partition peculiar to Provence, estates are divided, at each death, among all the co-heirs. Whoever desires to own his home must buy it back, room by room; and I know of tiny houses which involved more exertion and diplomacy, ere they passed

* How are you, Scratch-pebble?

into the possession of a single owner, than France used to secure her unity.

Now, the castle does not belong entirely to the Gazans, its undisputed ownership being Mademoiselle Norette's dream.

For this she toils, and she has already succeeded, taking advantage of a death, in obtaining the rooms in the fifth story, in exchange for a bit of meadow land; while, by dint of a few sacrifices, she has evicted a shoemaker, who pounded his leather in the little drawing-room on the ground-floor.

But there is still the stable, worth, at a high valuation, fifty francs, for which she would gladly pay a thousand, because this dark abode at the very end of the house carries with it a right of way.

The documents are formal:

"Item, the owner of the stable shall have a perpetual right to the passage, which must be paved so that a loaded donkey will not slip on it."

So, for the convenience of a donkey, Mademoiselle Norette, secretly raging, daily hurts her little feet.

If the donkey even existed!

No; it is an imaginary donkey, a creation of the brain, a mere fiction.

There really was one once, called by its master, that scamp of a Galfar—a near relative with whom the Gazans had quarrelled—Saladin, to the great rage of Saladine. But one fine day Galfar, a frequenter of ale-houses, lost it while playing vendôme. This, however, does not prevent his keeping the stable,

where he sees fit to live on the days when, with his guns and dogs—Galfar is also a bit of a poacher—he climbs to the village, and exacting—insolent, shrewd rascal—the maintenance of the donkey's road precisely as if the donkey was still there.

XV

THE EMIR'S FESTIVAL

YESTERDAY at sunset a bareheaded lad, with a very solemn face, passed through the streets of the village.

Every twenty steps he stopped, and blowing into a huge shell, whose point had been broken off expressly to form a mouth-piece, he sent forth a prolonged, dismal note.

Then he uttered the *cri*, the prologue to the festival, and the people listened with faces as solemn as his own.

I recognized Ganteaume, who, at the cost of heaven knows what manœuvres, had secured permission to perform the duties of herald for a single evening.

This morning men, women, and children are trooping from the neighboring villages along the white paths which stripe the mountain-sides to the valley, thence to climb again towards Puget.

Puget is preparing to receive them worthily. Lambs are crying, sheep are bleating, and in every court-yard, at every door, amateur butchers, with bared arms, holding their knives between their teeth, are killing, skinning, and cutting the animals into pieces.

Hospitality is blended with vainglory. There is rivalry as to which dwelling shall entertain the largest number of friends and distant relations. And, while house-keepers and servants are setting the tables, turning the spits, and heaping embers around the sauce-pans, the fresh blood-stained skins nailed on the front of each house proclaim, to the admiration of all who pass, the number of the animals which are to be eaten within.

Shots are fired, and hymns are heard.

"Let us run," says Ganteaume; "there's the bravado."

The penitents are bringing the saint, for whom they have gone in state to the mountain. The statue, which dates from time immemorial, is adorned with bunches of fresh grapes. Beneath its litter hangs a stole; the children run to and fro under it, sure that this will make them strong and brave, while the young men, marching at the head of the procession, are discharging their guns in honor of the saint.

Afterwards he will be carried back to the lonely chapel he occupies the whole year, standing on the altar and staring with his wooden eyes through the narrow grated window, between whose bars an occasional pilgrim sometimes flings a penny, at the cliff dominated by the chapel, a crag which in spring is violet with lavender, and, after the month of August, gray beneath its mantle of scorched grass.

Night promises us other amusements.

After supper, served, as usual, at eight o'clock, I went with Monsieur Gazan and Norette to see the



dancing. I expected a ball, but no indeed! Women do not dance here; it is a virile exercise reserved exclusively for men.

Ranged in two rows a dozen sturdy fellows, arrayed in quaint costumes and carrying swords, executed by

torchlight, to the sound of the tambourine, a war-dance with numerous and complicated figures, which Abbé Sèbe, who has just joined us, asserts to be the Pyrrhic. Then, moving with rhythmic step around a May-pole hung with long ribbons of various colors, they combined, by means of crossing and uncrossing them, the most charming interweaving. The whole scene formed an amusing mixture of rococo and half-savage customs, like the vague memory of courtly entertainments formerly given in this secluded rustic corner of the world by some aristocratic hostess who was enamoured of Watteau.

Abbé Sèbe, a great pagan, spite of his priestly robe, explains to me, supporting his opinion by quotations, that this is a legendary game, introduced into Provence by the Phocian sailors, and representing the winding of the labyrinth of Crete.

Abbé Sèbe explains everything, except the Turk. For these dances are performed in the presence of a Turk, a handsome emir with a false beard, who, as if the festival was given in his honor, remains motionless, with thoroughly Oriental serenity, leaving the others to bestir themselves.

And what a turban! For an instant I suspect Ganteaume of having appropriated Imbert-Pacha's head-covering for the occasion. But the emir is tall; he would easily make two of Ganteaume, and, besides, the lad, very proud of carrying a torch, is marching yonder in the front rank of the procession.

The emir seems to be watching me, fixing on me from time to time his sparkling eyes, to which a pair

of eyebrows, heavily marked with cork, lend a very fierce expression.

What has the emir to do with me?

Does he know my weakness for Moorish things? Has he guessed that I came here for the express purpose of seeking traces of the chivalric conquerors whom he unconsciously represents? Whatever Abbé Sèbe, with his mania for seeing everywhere only Greeks and Romans, may think of it, I trace with good reason a Saracenic tradition in the part played by this bearded emir.

He is approaching us. What if I should speak to him.

But Mademoiselle Norette seems afraid. She says it is growing cold, that we must go in. Let us go, in obedience to her decree.

XVI

COUSIN Galfar



THE emir was not watching me from any sense of sympathy.

We have just met at the Gazans' door. He was making himself perfectly at home there, leaning against the wall and smoking, with his gun on his shoulder and his dog at his feet.

A burly fellow, indeed! A sort of Corsican brigand, clad in velvet, with unkempt hair, an indescribable air of youthful assurance, a bronzed countenance, and a pair of big blue eyes, whose glance is both bold and gentle.

Where the deuce have I seen this handsome savage? Surely I *have* met him somewhere.

Taking the risk, I bow to him. He returns the salute courteously, though not without a touch of irony. But, just as I am about to speak to him, he whistles to his dog and moves away.

"Well, so you know him!" cries Saladine. "That's Galfar, the man who has the Donkey's Passage. We've been glad to have no news of him for two months. Here he is back again, no doubt with some mischief in his head. It's a queer notion, all the same, that the people should choose such a Christian for the Turk."

"You know," Monsieur Honnorat interrupts, "that custom requires the Turk to be a member of our family. So it's natural that, on my refusal. . . ."

Monsieur Honnorat says "on my refusal" in a constrained, almost angry tone. Perhaps he was not asked to personate the Turk this year, perhaps Norette would not consent? Yet I imagine Monsieur Honnorat, grave Monsieur Honnorat, playing the Turk: a vision that fills me with delight.

"To choose that Galfar, how is it possible?"

Yet "that Galfar" at first sight does not seem to me exactly a bad fellow. But, if resentful Saladine is to be believed, I should do very wrong to trust to appearances.

He is a spendthrift, an idler, a worthy son of the old Galfars, who were formerly rich, but prodigal, keeping open house, and, on pretext of relationship—everybody is a cousin when one is seeking kinsmen—housing and feeding every chance-comer for months.

One Christmas, during the great-grandfather's time,

forty-two persons were entertained at supper, and the skins of fifteen sheep framed the door-way, and there are people who remember having seen on their door-steps, from New-year's Day to St. Silvester's Eve, a table covered with a white cloth, on which a glass and a jug of wine, refilled as soon as it was emptied, stood ready, gratis, to quench the thirst of any one who chanced to pass.

With such management a fortune is quickly melted, especially when there are lawsuits.

One after another, little by little, all the estates have been sold, and now the Galfars are so poor that, without fear of thieves, they might bar their door with a bush.

Nothing is left save one small farm the bailiffs did not want, on which the family live. The father tries to cultivate the ground, but he took the mattock in hand too late; one doesn't learn to be a peasant at college. One fine morning, after having wandered abroad, served as a sailor, tried all sorts of trades, the son returned; now he makes powder on the sly and poaches. The mother, tortured by pride and dismal thoughts, doesn't find the day long enough for the tears she sheds.

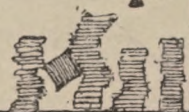
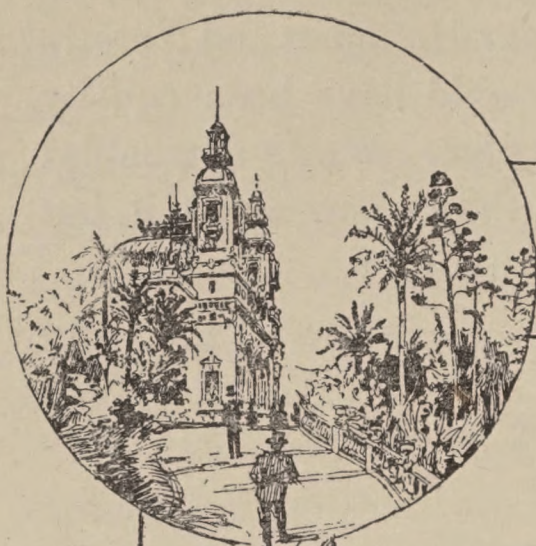
"And is it since the ruin that the two families have quarrelled?"

"No, indeed! On the contrary, Monsieur Honnorat tried to make advances to them and help them. The Galfars would not respond. The Galfars and the Gazans are born quarrelling; they drink in enmity with their mothers' milk."

Saladine did not exaggerate.

I vainly questioned Monsieur Honnorat and Norette on this point; doubtless it would have been equally useless to speak to Cousin Galfar. Waste of trouble! They are enemies, that's all they know about it, but neither party could tell me why.





XVII

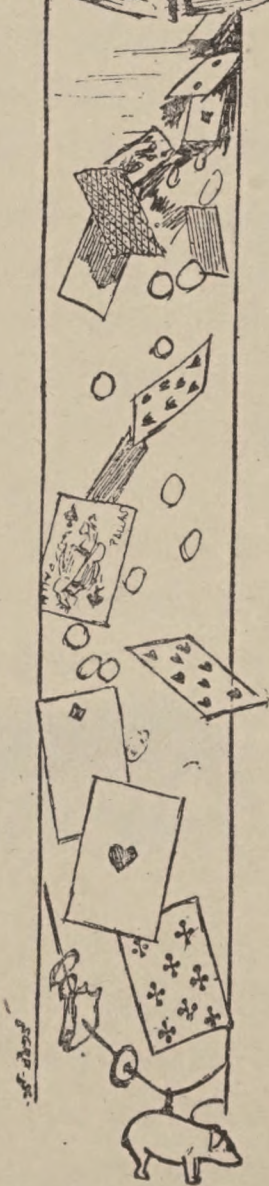
AT MONTE CARLO

GANTEAUME, beaming with delight and full of enthusiasm, came to wake me.

Yesterday, at The Seafaring Bacchus, where, in my absence, he dined alone, as sometimes happens while I am wandering among the mountains, Ganteaume overheard the 'Turk talking.' Now, this Turk, it appears, knows me, and told some very queer things of me.

I must here insert a parenthesis and make a painful confession.

Not very far from Puget-Maure—eight or ten hours' journey, but a bird at a single flight would cross the few woods of cork-trees



or pines, the few sun-scorched hills and white promontories that intervene—is a singular country, called by its inhabitants *Mounègue*, but better known to Frenchmen by its Italian name, *Monaco*.

Monsieur Honnorat even declares—let us leave the responsibility of the assertion to him—that, on certain clear days, with a good spy-glass, one can see from the top of my tower the old Monaco of the Middle Ages on its sea-washed rock; lower down Monte Carlo, with its gardens and palaces; and between them the little *port d'Hercule*, where the tartans rock.

I can see it all better in my memory.

Moreover, I can see myself, not two months ago, under the tall rose-bushes that blossom in winter, breathing the salt air, listening to the rustling of the palm-trees, admiring the shimmering splendor of the gulf.

No one there yet! A solitude at once delightful and paradoxical amid these fairy-like scenes, where the beauties of nature and art are happily blended.

Six o'clock strikes, an engine whistles; the train from Nice comes in with its daily load of male and female gamblers.

The crowd surges up the steps, where the gas is already lighted as twilight closes in.

Men with restless eyes but quiet bearing; women more visibly excited, less capable of concealing their impatience to plunge into the bath of gold. And now let us leave the stars to shine in vain above, where no eyes will be lifted to them. The faint perfumes used by women have replaced the scent of the roses; the

palm-trees and the waves cease their murmured converse, seeming to keep silence for the express purpose of letting only the chink of coins be heard.

Before seeking seclusion in Skipper Ruf's house, and when just on the point of carrying my wise projects into execution, I desired, I confess, to enjoy for the last time the contrasts of feeling to be experienced in Monte Carlo.

After spending my days out of doors, dreaming of Virgil in some pine wood, or falling asleep in company with Theocritus in the hollow of a rock on the shore, it afforded me keen pleasure in the evening to battle—sometimes victor, sometimes vanquished—with Gold, the contemptible yet omnipotent Cæsar that rules the world.

In short, for one whole week, having devoted a certain sum to this purpose, I pursued the profession of gambling, and apparently played my part well, for the night I lost my last crown the cosmopolitan beauties of the place—Americans, Russians, and the rest—seemed to sympathize with my suffering, and the big devil of a lackey in the red waistcoat, that Providence of the victims whose throats are parched by agony, offered me the traditional glass of water on a silver tray with manifest consideration.

There is something still better!

One of the estimable gentlemen, professors, minus a diploma, of roulette and *trente-et-quarante*, whose business consists in revealing the arcana of the art to novices, and—Midases that they are in frayed surtouts—in teaching them the infallible method of breaking

the bank every evening—one of these, I say, Monsieur Pascal, aye! Monsieur Blaise Pascal, came to see me.

This Monsieur Blaise really possessed a title with an Italian termination, and his cards bore something resembling a count's coronet, but in Monaco he was more frequently called Blaise Pascal, because he never accepted anything for his advice, contenting himself with making you subscribe—it usually cost a louis or two—for an edition, with notes and commentaries, which for the last twenty years had been ready to appear the following year, of the *Treatise on Roulette*, composed, as everybody knows, by the famous author of the *Provinciales*.

“*Historia Trochoïdis sive cycloïdis, gallice la Roulette.*”

Some practical joker had put this idea into the head of the worthy professor of gambling, who, on the strength of the book printed by Guillaume Desprès, Rue Saint Jacques, à l'image Saint Prosper, regarded Blaise Pascal as a comrade, never doubting that he was a famous sharper in the reign of Louis XIV.

Place of meeting: the square of the gaming palace in front of the large restaurant which faces the hotel, and, beyond its roofs, la Turbie, for it is a long time since Monsieur Pascal was permitted to enter its halls.

“It seems,” he said, after being offered a glass of absinthe, a tribute I willingly paid in exchange for his frequently amusing chatter—“it seems you are about to return to Paris. The ball favors you no more than the cards do, and you are right to give them up.”

I bowed, thus acknowledging the accuracy of this tardy advice.

“But I have something better to propose.”

“Don’t hesitate; propose it, my dear Monsieur Blaise.”

“An immense thing, *stoupendo*!”—Monsieur Blaise murdered Italian in moments of great excitement—“an amazing scheme, *miravigliosa*, millions, billions, enough to buy Monte Carlo, Monaco, and all France, for a mere paltry investment of capital—ten or fifteen thousand francs at most.”

Then he began to tell me some vague story about a hidden treasure, whose secret had been discovered by a sailor. The only thing requisite—and for that money was needed—was to get possession of some old papers, manuscripts, and, above all, a mysterious article, with which its owner was unwilling to part. The sailor would attend to that; *ma*, money must first be had, *oun petit arzent*.

Anywhere else the proposal would have made me smile. There was nothing extraordinary about it in Monaco, where I have seen very chimerical projects concocted by people who were perfectly sensible in other places.

Besides, why diminish worthy Monsieur Pascal’s hopes? I neither assented nor refused, but asked permission to think it over, promising an answer immediately on my return, and even carrying compliance to the point of allowing myself to be made acquainted with the sailor in question, who was waiting for us, abominably drunk, in a pothouse.

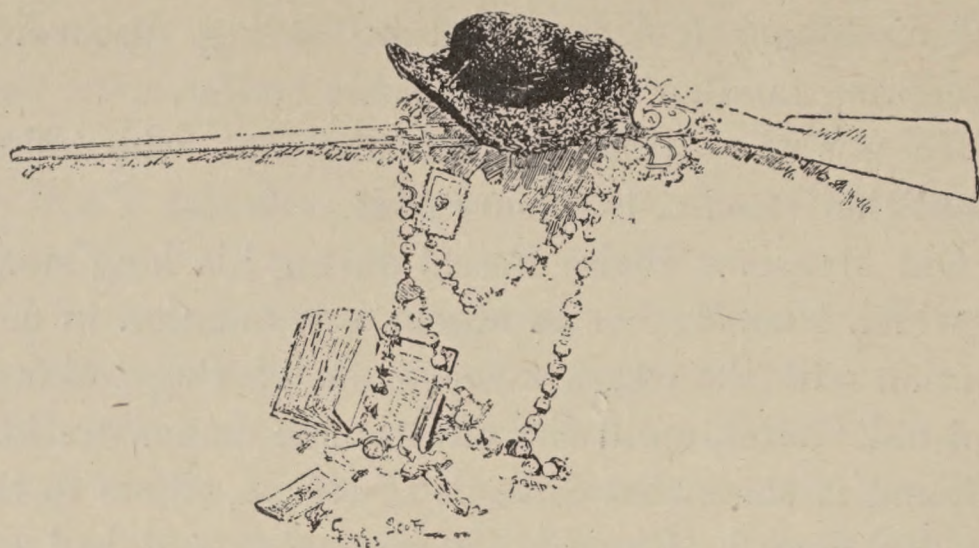
I no longer feel surprised at having discovered something familiar about handsome Galfar.

He was the drunken sailor, the man who talked about the treasure, I am sure of it.

Did Monsieur Blaise Pascal during his long story, to which I lent rather an absent ear, mention in connection with the treasure the name of Puget-Maure, and did Galfar, amid the affectionate demonstrations I found it somewhat difficult to escape, allude to the Golden Goat? I could not remember, and had certainly paid no special heed to it.

Yet Galfar imagines, not without a show of reason, that I have come to Puget treacherously, acting on the information given by Monsieur Blaise Pascal and himself, that I mean to secure the Golden Goat treasures for my sole use, and that my rambles through the country, my examination of old papers, even my intimacy with Monsieur Gazan and Norette, have no other object than the discovery of the secret.

Such is the summary of the excited report Ganteaume made concerning the conversation he overheard yesterday in The Seafaring Bacchus.



XVIII

HUNTING WITH THE CURÉ

THERE is positive reason for believing that the goat actually exists.

From the day when, smoking his pipe and jesting, Skipper Ruf spoke of it to me at the *calanque* of Aygues-Sèches—from my encounter in the valley at dusk with Misé Jano (everybody calls Norette's capering pet mademoiselle), and my finding the collar-bolt she had lost—this is the third time the uncanny Golden Goat has crossed my path.

Heaven knows that I came to Puget-Maure with no criminal intention, and that, at the time of my arrival, I was certainly thinking of anything except the Golden Goat. But since I am suspected, since I am accused, since Galfar and Providence itself seem leagued to urge me on, I am going deliberately in pursuit of the pretty, red-haired monster ; and I swear

by its horns to discover, before the end of the week, what grain of truth is concealed in the picturesque legend through which it is galloping.

But whom shall I question? . . .

The villagers? Alas! they are taciturn, and the least imprudent query would at once make them share the suspicions with which Galfar honors me.

Monsieur Honnorat? From what Ganteaume has repeated of Galfar's talk, the Gazans must be more or less directly connected with these tales of goats and hidden treasures. Besides, how am I to speak to Monsieur Honnorat about the Golden Goat without mentioning also the mysterious bell? Now No-rette — for what reason? — requires me to keep silence on that point. On the other hand, it does not seem very desirable to move in the matter alone.

Chance has helped me by bringing Abbé Sèbe to my room just at the moment when, in despair, I was preparing to go to him.

We are now inseparable friends.

At first, to tell the truth, I felt little attracted towards this hale, loud-talking, hard-drinking fellow, who still retained his peasant manners; a priest who, with his patched cassock and face shaven but once a week, looks more like a Mussulman marabout than a minister of the Gospel. But he persisted in making my acquaintance, and no matter in what direction I might turn my steps, I was sure to see in the stony paths, shining white in the sun, the black silhouette of Abbé Sèbe, doubled by his shadow.



I fled from him, avoiding his wave of the hat, fearing he might wish to convert me.

A mistake! Abbé Sèbe leaves to worthier men the glory and anxiety of conversions. He baptizes, marries, buries, trusting the rest to the Eternal Father, and very well satisfied if he succeeds in guiding to the end of the year, without too many mishaps, the troublesome flock of which Providence has made him shepherd.

The morning when, conquered by such persistence, I stopped and talked with him, his dark skin reddened through the stubble of his beard with a child's flush of pleasure, and this man of God, unable to hide his real delight, fairly crushed my finger-joints in a grip whose warmth instantly revealed to me that, before holding the communion-cup and pyx, he, a mountaineer, had guided the plough on his father's little farm for several years, while getting a smattering of Latin in the barn during the winter.

Learned in his own way, an excellent judge of broken pots, a great collector of the antique coins the peasants sometimes pick up on the ground after a rain, never returning home without having his pockets stuffed with pebbles, Abbé Sèbe—since Monsieur Honnorat, once so agreeable, now lapses more and more into Turkish indolence—is not sorry to find some one to whom he can confide the overflow of his observations and thoughts.

I interest myself in the Romans, whom he loves; he, without very clearly understanding them, tries to interest himself in my Saracenic researches. But it

is my gun, I feel certain, that will finally make him a distinguished Orientalist.

Yes, my gun! When I am rambling through the fields I always take a gun by way of pretext. The abbé, an eager lover of sport and an excellent shot, fairly ached to see me carry this ridiculously useless weapon without ever discharging it.

One day, far away from the village and sure of not being seen, he took it from me to try.

He did try, and killed a hare.

The next day he tried again and decimated a covey of partridges.

Twice I brought my game-bag home full, amazing Monsieur Honnorat and winning the respect of the village.

Since then it has been an understood thing, when we go out, that after completing my erudite collections, I lie down in the shadow of a rock and give my gun and cartridges to the worthy abbé, who, with his cassock tucked up, displaying his hobnailed shoes, and trousers reddened with mud, sets off to shoot hares and partridges.

We both find an advantage in it.

The abbé, imbued with sudden ardor for science, shows me curious ruins of buildings, and gives names of families or districts that seem to be connected with my studies; but, by a singular coincidence, wherever the abbé knows of anything he deems worth showing me, we always find, in addition, a hare waiting in its form, or partridges ready for the sportsman's lead.

XIX

THE HERMITAGE

THERE must be at least two hares near the hermitage; surely Abbé Sèbe would never take me so far for only one.

For it is perched very high up, and the road climbs perpetually among rocks marvellously barren.

But the abbé has promised me some ruins.

The ruins are there, and—so are the hares.

The abbé kills one at first, reserving, I imagine, the massacre of the second to while away our return; then we visit the ruins.

They consist of a small Romanesque chapel covered with a tiled roof, on which grass and briars are growing thickly; then a heap of plaster at one end of a walled square, formerly the abode and burial-place of the hermits; and in front a fountain with carved armorial bearings, still visible under the moss, dating from the commencement of the Renaissance.

All this, no doubt, has its charms, but possesses no very special interest for me.

However, at an angle of the wall of the chapel, facing the east, the abbé pointed out a sundial on the rough plaster coating, greatly disintegrated by

the rain and the sea-wind. Above it is a cartouch bearing some black letters, the remains of an inscription. The abbé, though he remembers having seen it nearly complete, cannot tell me the meaning. It was apparently a distich about shadow and treasures, as obscure in its barbaric Latin as a prophecy of Nostradamus.

“This sundial and inscription,” the abbé continues, pleased with the attention I am giving him, “were made about the middle of the eighteenth century by a member of the Gazan family, a physician and disciple of the famous Mesmer, who is remembered as a somewhat crack-brained, eccentric personage, half philosopher, half sorcerer. The inscription always possessed the gift of exciting people’s curiosity.

“They imagined, nay, they still cherish the fancy that it points out the place where, in ancient times, vast treasures were buried, and—a coincidence that has had no little share in strengthening this opinion—the fountain you see yonder is called ‘The Fountain of the Golden Goat.’”

I started.

“What, Monsieur Abbé, you knew of this Fountain of the Golden Goat and never told me a word about it! Yet its name did not come hap-hazard; it must be associated with some significant legend.”

“Well, there is a tradition in the country, as you are not unaware, of a fairy goat which bestows power and happiness on those who can seize and hold her, while she leaves in the hearts of those who merely



catch a glimpse of her nothing save bitterness and insatiable longing. Such, at least, is the version of the simple-minded folk and of the poets, the version told at the evening gatherings while the women are sorting the almonds, or at the mill when the men are pressing the black olives.;

"But practical people have found another one. Disinclined to believe in the supernatural, they think that this name of Golden Goat is merely a symbolical way of speaking of a real treasure, hidden in the neighborhood of the chapel where we now are, and which could be found by digging in the right place.

"So but few years pass without some one's trying to make a hazel-rod bend in the old cemetery near the fountain. The lunatics, with their pickaxes and mattocks, have nearly demolished the chapel, as you see, and sacrilegiously upturned the bones of the hermits who sleep there. And only the other day I was obliged to drive out of my door, by threatening him with a cudgel, a parishioner who wanted to bring me here at the stroke of midnight to repeat the Black Mass."

"So, you're not a believer?" . . .

"I believe only in God and the Pope. But, after all, according to popular opinion, the treasure in question would be a Saracen treasure, and, according to you, the Saracens left so many things in Puget that I don't see why, on their departure, they shouldn't have left a treasure."

He laughed and added:

"I thought this would deserve your notice; I even,

on the chance, put in my pocket an old parchment copy-book, which Monsieur Honnorat lent me and I haven't yet taken time to return. A journal; it dates from the fifteenth century. You will find information about the chapel and the fountain. Only—don't say a word of this to Monsieur Honnorat or to Mademoiselle Norette!—the Gazans, I don't know why, are not fond of having people talk much about the Golden Goat."

XX

THE JOURNAL

THE abbé hesitated as he gave me the book. He seemed to regret having offered it. And then, what was the motive of this express injunction to say nothing about it to Monsieur Honnorat or to Norette?

I started, I remember, yes! started visibly, when the abbé, thinking no harm, uttered the words "the Golden Goat," which had haunted me so long.

Had he noticed my emotion? Did he, too, like Galfar, suspect me of plotting the capture of the treasures buried in Puget-Maure?

Spite of his urgency, I refused to go home with him to eat the hare. On the pretext of important work, letters to write, I failed even to spend the evening at the Gazans'.

So here I am, in my abominable tavern, in the act of dining opposite to Ganteaume, who is watching me and wondering what can be the contents of the precious volume laid on the table near me, from which I never turn my eyes.

But Ganteaume will not have his curiosity gratified.

Something tells me that under this worm-eaten, fawn-colored leather binding, nibbled by the mites

and soft as tinder, I shall find, if not the solution, at least the premises of the problem whose mystery occupies and attracts me more and more.

I wait until I am in my own room, and there—listening to Misé Jano's plaintive bleating, turning my back on the landscape, always magnificent at this hour when the sun is sinking behind the hills and the sea, as much excited as a person who dreads to find an ancient mysterious box empty—I unfasten, with trembling fingers, the faded ribbon that closes the covers of the book.

The abbé did not deceive me.

It is one of those journals formerly in general use among Provençal families, containing on its revered pages memoranda in which, amid the births, deaths, and marriages, were noted, day by day, the great and small events of the country or the household.

But these domestic archives of the Gazan family have the advantage of going back beyond the fifteenth century. If, preceding a few blank pages at the end, the last blackened ones revealed, in their delicate yet firm chirography, the hand of a rich bourgeoisie, a virtuous contemporary of the Pompadour, the regular, ornate, magisterial Gothic letters at the commencement evidently came from the pen of the clerk of the chapel, or the village notary, writing in obedience to the dictation of the mistress of the castle.

A fortnight ago it would have been a banquet, a regular orgy, for me to devour with my eyes, examining and commentating, at the risk of being surprised by

dawn, the yellow pages where, from Norette's great-grandfather, I can, year by year, almost day by day, go back to the very origin of the family, the distant ancestors who came from the East.

What a fountain-head of documents, what a mine for my studies! But, to-day, I am in search of something else: an item, a bit of information relating to the hermitage, the fountain, the enigmatical, undecipherable sundial of the old wizard doctor.

Unfortunately, many pages, which seem to have been intentionally torn out, are missing.

There is no trace of the legend, nothing but a few lines stating that, in the year 1503, the noble Melchior Gazan, with benevolent intent and to secure the repose of the souls of "the two dead men," grants permission to the hermits, for the present and as long as it shall flow, to conduct by earthen pipes to their hermitage and chapel, on condition of suffering those who pass along the road to use it and its overflow, the water of the spring belonging to him and gushing naturally from the place called "The Goat's Rock."





XXI

THE FOUNTAIN

THAT the treasure once existed is certain ; legend, tradition, certain facts I have discovered, all attest it.

That it exists still is probable ; how could the secret of its discovery have been kept ?

But how to find it . . . that's the puzzle ! Perhaps its fate is to remain underground till the Judgment-day, dull and useless, like so many lost treasures whose metals and gems will never more be brought into the living joys of the sunlight.

Yet one morning, unintentionally, led by some instinctive impulse rather than by my will, I climbed the hills towards the hermitage.

The sun, which had risen above the horizon long before, but was still invisible behind the mountains, tinged their summits with rose-color. Reaching the fountain, I stood watching its two masks spouting the water and the drops falling on the filaments of moss.

Suddenly the sun appeared, flooding the plateau with a sheet of white light, and the shadow of the little monument, clear and straight, stretched to my feet.

Then—memory has these chances, ideas have these sudden associations—thinking of the Latin distich on the sundial, I suddenly recollected—where had I read it?—the adventure of Robert Guiscard in Sicily and the marble column, the statue crowned with a bronze circlet, on which was engraved “On the first of May, at sunrise, I shall have a crown of gold.” A Saracen, one of Count Robert’s prisoners, penetrated the mysterious meaning of the words, for Robert, by his instructions, having had the earth dug up on the first of May at sunrise in the place marked by the end of the shadow cast by the statue, found, says the chronicler, a great and very rich treasure.

Evidently, if the inscription traced by the old disciple of Mesmer on the sundial of the hermitage has ever meant anything, and if the treasure still exists, the shadow of some object must mark the place.

Why not the shadow of the fountain, since it is called “The Fountain of the Golden Goat?”

The people who come at night to dig in the earth around it certainly are not far wrong, save for their belief in the hazel-wand and the Black Mass.

They burn, as the saying goes, but their efforts will remain useless, for they have no better knowledge than I of the hour and the time when the shadow would turn informer.

All signs are lacking, the inscription itself is effaced, and the abbé who once read it retains but a dim memory of its purport, just sufficient to excite my curiosity, but not enough to guide me.

Less fortunate than Robert Guiscard, not having, alas, at my service a Saracen prisoner, one of those sons of Hagar, who by heredity are experts in divining the secret of figures, I will give up the treasure of Puget-Maure.

And, laughing at myself a little, amused by my day-dreams, I stretched myself under a tree with a desire to forget the treasure, while the fountain, crossed by slanting sunbeams, seemed, a besetting vision, to roll in its crystal waters, amid its foam, diamonds and bits of gold.



XXII

THE GOAT'S ROCK

SINCE that time I have been reflecting; for this matter is becoming as fascinating as the pursuit of a problem.

If the treasure itself, or the entrance to the cavern which—if certain stories may be believed—contains it, can be found in the neighborhood of the fountain it might be discovered by carefully sounding the narrow space of earth within the shadow—longer or shorter, according to the seasons—cast by the pyramid.

But I am now convinced that the treasure is not hidden there.

The fountain is barely four centuries old, and is not contemporaneous with the treasure.

Besides, a child would have thought of it at once; the name, Fountain of the Golden Goat, applied to the little monument erected for the hermits, would have no great significance, since it was evidently called so by association, in memory of the Goat's Rock, whence flowed the original spring.

At any rate it is an easy matter to find the rock. The pipes having broken during the four centuries in

many a place, I need only follow for half an hour along the barren hill-side the green line traced on the earth by the comfrets and shave-grass, plants whose presence reveals the vicinity of water, to reach a plateau strewn with ruins, probably the remains of some stronghold, and in sight of a limestone rock very singular in form, at whose feet the crystal waters of the spring gush forth.

This plateau, an irregular quadrangle, accessible only from the side down which the outlet of the spring flows, is surrounded on the three others by cliffs crowned with ruined walls.

The earth echoes under the tread; there are caverns, either natural or hollowed by the hand of man, within the cliffs. Here, not in the hermitage, but here amid these lonely rocks, must be the abode of the Golden Goat.

Yet the difficulty is increasing.

To dig hap-hazard would be folly; the whole plateau, excepting a thin layer of broken bricks and pebbles, is a shelf of living rock.

Besides, the digging would not be merely on the plateau. The rock overhangs the escarpment, and it is along its slope that, at this time of the day, as though over a gigantic dial, its shadow moves.

Is not this an illusion? The peak of the rock, clearly outlined, points to an inaccessible black hole yawning like the mouth of a cavern. What if chance had aided me? What if I had arrived at the very instant the shadow pointed to the mysterious entrance. . . .

Just at that moment a quick call, "Here, Warrior!" sounding clearly in the solitude of the place, startled me.

It was an old shepherd calling his dog.

Absorbed in my day-dreams, I had not heard him come.

Without lifting his hat, which remained as immovable on his peasant skull as that of a grandee of Spain, he gave me the Provençal greeting, "God be with you!" Then leaving Warrior to follow at the heels of the five or six sheep that were nibbling the scanty herbage, and paying no further heed to me than if I did not exist, he began to smoke his pipe in short, regular puffs, with his eyes fixed on the horizon and his legs dangling over the precipice.



XXIII

PEU-PARLE'S SPEECH

HAVING re-
turned to the
Goat's Rock sev-
eral times, I final-

ly scraped acquaintance with Peu-Parle, the nickname bestowed on this silent man.

His taciturnity is excessive. Briefly, as is his custom, he explains his reasons for it.

"What's the use of talking when there is nothing to say? Above all, what's the use of talking, even when there is something to say, since, nine times out of ten, it would be wiser to keep still?"

And Peu-Parle does keep still, to his intense delight, spending his time, as he did the first day I met him, near the Goat's Rock, always sitting in the same place with his eyes fixed upon the same spot.

People say Peu-Parle knows the secret.

That is why he goes up the hill every morning, winter and summer, and is seen, for whole days together, gazing at a spot known to him alone, the retreat of the Golden Goat.

Peu-Parle might be as rich as Crœsus if he desired. He doesn't; the mere idea satisfies him. The jealous guardian of a treasure he scorns, refusing to touch it, dreading to let others approach it, he has thus lived forty years, happy and ragged, with his dream and his chimera.

Peu-Parle is reputed to be a wizard. The old women who go out to pick lavender have seen, at nightfall, when the sun has set, strange figures moving before his fire.

Men, even brave ones, do not like to hear at a late hour the shrill bark of his dog Warrior, and the noise of his heavy shoes on the stones.



In other respects he is a worthy man and respected—as we respect the powerful.

One day Peu-Parle talked with me.

I had offered him some tobacco to fill his pipe, which, for lack of money, he was sucking while it was empty. The attention pleased him, and we entered into conversation.

“So you’ve come for the treasure? Don’t say no; I talk little, but I hear a great deal, and I sometimes go down to the village. You’ve come a very long distance, it seems. Good! The King of Majorca’s treasure is worth a few leagues’ travel.”

“The King of Majorca?”

“Why, yes; an old king who came here by sea, and was afterwards obliged to fly. You know these stories better than I do, and yet make me chatter. But no matter! Peu-Parle’s name is Peu-Parle; he tells only what he chooses, and he guessed it all the other day while seeing you watch the shadow.

“What harm has the Golden Goat done you? Why not leave it in peace on the mountain? It comes and goes in the moonlight, drinking the pure water and harming nobody.

“After it has been captured there is little gain.

“In captivity the Golden Goat will revenge itself, for gold is the source of every trouble. For its sake men hate one another; for its sake women do not wed those who love them. In the hermits’ close there are two tombs—Monsieur Honnorat knows them well—the tombs of two cousins, who died a violent death for having desired to catch the Golden Goat.

"Let the gold stay hidden, let the Golden Goat remain free.

"If, as people believe, I, Peu-Parle, by just raising a finger, could make the riches the rock covers again come forth to the light of day, I would not lift the finger, I would let the wealth lie. . . ."

Peu-Parle continued for several minutes longer the apocalyptic speech, in which the fabulous Golden Goat mingled, like a vague vision, with the more tangible treasures forgotten by the King of Majorca.

Then, doubtless fatigued by this effort, he whistled to Warrior, rose, and, clasping my hand, said:

"It would be a fine thing to succeed in this enterprise. I wish you good-luck. Once, in my young days, I tried it; but courage won't suffice; there must be a woman who loves you. Men plan and calculate, woman has the golden key: win Norette's love."

XXIV

A BOUQUET

THIS is turning into a fairy-tale. So, according to old Peu-Parle, to obtain the treasure I must first masquerade—at my age!—as Prince Charming, in which case I should have for the Sleeping Beauty Mademoiselle Norette.

But Norette is no princess. Monsieur Honnorat's house, though picturesque, bears only the faintest resemblance to the castles buried in the depths of enchanted forests, and I have no desire to play suitor to a little peasant maid for the sake of mere illusive hopes.

For these hopes are indeed visionary, and I myself find great amusement in analyzing the strange turmoil that—in consequence, perhaps, of the present isolation of my life—has gradually taken possession of my soul.

What! Because, one idle morning, the idea occurred to me of devoting more or less erudite study to the Arabs of Provence; because I found pleasure in searching for the light traces left in the country by their passage; because, on the day of my arrival, the mists of overheated air, the intoxicating odor of the resin and lavender gave me, for a few seconds, an hallucination

resulting naturally from a dream ; because, Misé Jano having lost it, I picked up a bell inscribed with characters that seemed to me singular ; I, more credulous than a peasant, more visionary than a shepherd, am wasting my time in seeking means to secure, in the depths of a cavern doubtless guarded by a dragon, the riches left by the King of Majorca.

While pondering over these thoughts, I was mechanically descending the mountain, but on the side opposite to the one by which I had climbed it.

A narrow, almost invisible path winds along amid mossy rocks and herbage. For, while the southern slope, scorched by the sun, is barren, the northern one, almost always in the shadow, and constantly moistened by subterranean waters oozing undoubtedly from the same mysterious reservoir that feeds the spring of the Goat's Rock, looks delightfully verdant.

Our mountains show these contrasts, and, in certain privileged corners, spring often lingers, while, a few steps away, the leaves and grass are withered by the fires of summer.

Flowers are growing in this place, delicate Alpine flowers, of unknown species. I gathered some, and finally made a bouquet which, for better preservation, I encircled with brakes and maidenhair, a precaution that enabled me to carry it safely to the village.

Monsieur Honnorat, whom I met walking alone in the square, admired it greatly on account of its rarity at this season. I told him I had gathered it for Mademoiselle Norette.

“ You've chosen a bad time ! This is washing-day,

and on washing-days the house is uninhabitable. I took flight, and dared not even go to look for my pipe, which was unluckily left behind. Norette and Saladine are *hanging out* in the court-yard. After all, there is no harm in trying, perhaps a bouquet will put her in better humor."

Saladine, who had the advantage of a tall figure, was sulkily hanging on lines, that crossed one another in every direction from corner to corner between the arcades, the sheets which Norette passed to her, and Ganteaume religiously passed to Norette.

Monsieur Honnorat, somewhat emboldened by my presence, cautiously advanced.

"Norette; see, Norette! Here is a beautiful bouquet somebody has brought to you."

I don't know what there was about my bouquet, which looked like any other, but at the mere sight of the poor little flowers Ganteaume reddened to his ears, Saladine darted an angry glance at me, and Norette, who was already clasping them in her trembling fingers, seemed strangely moved by so trivial an attention.

"Let us be off now, I have my pipe!" said worthy Monsieur Honnorat.

While following him, I was thinking of Peu-Parle's enigmatical words: "Woman has the golden key: win Norette's love."

Has the old shepherd, in his character of sorcerer, seen things I have not perceived? Can it be that, without my suspecting it, from mere caprice, Mademoiselle Norette loves me?

XXV

SKIPPER RUF'S SEA-URCHINS

A SURPRISE awaited me.

Whom did we meet at the door? Skipper Ruf, still smooth-shaven, still tanned, carrying in each hand a basket of freshly caught sea-urchins, whose chestnut-colored prickles were moving feebly amid the seaweeds packed around them.

This time Monsieur Honnorat dares to face Norette and Saladine. What are wash-days and women compared to a friend like Skipper Ruf and sea-urchins?

Dinner is to be prepared at once, for sea-urchins won't keep. I am invited, and so is the abbé, to whom Skipper Ruf sends Ganteaume.

Saladine, conquerèd at last, will dry her linen in the garden. We all sit around a table in the courtyard with the white arcades, under the vine whose rough trunk, from which the bark is peeling, looks like an aged boa dying.

Skipper Ruf, fearless of prickles, bravely opens one after another as we break eggs.

One! two! and the star of orange flesh appears swimming in a blackish mixture of salt-water and triturated algæ.

The abbé, a man with a mountaineer's prejudices, dislikes to eat these living creatures. I, a novice in the art, pour the algæ and sea-water into my plate, leaving only the yellow flesh, which I dig out with my knife. Monsieur Honnorat and Skipper Ruf laugh at us. They are not so fastidious, but swallow the whole—algæ, water, stars. They scrape the shells with bits of bread; then, shining with satisfaction, Monsieur Honnorat, his beard dripping, exclaims :

“It is like eating the sea !”

“Still, the right way to eat a sea-urchin isn't sitting within four walls,” Skipper Ruf interrupts, “but on the shore, or on the boat, while listening to the beat of the waves. At six o'clock in the morning, when the sun is scattering the fog, if I can have a tender roll and a bottle of claret, I'll finish my six dozen and look down upon Rothschild.”

Mademoiselle Norette had set the bouquet on the table, directly opposite to her, and lowers her eyes, blushing, every time I look at her or the flowers.

She is very lively this evening, too.

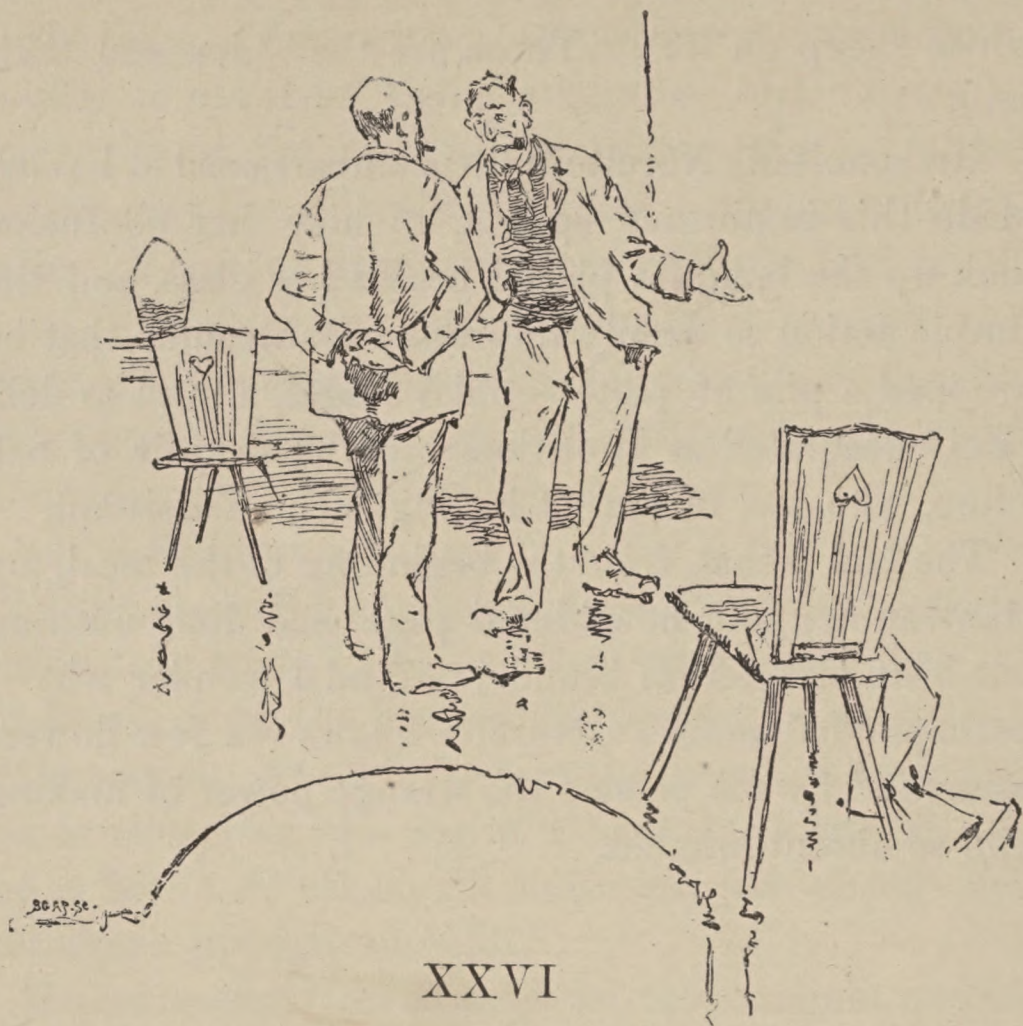
While we are talking about the sea, she describes the impression made upon her by the first sight of the Mediterranean.

Saladine was bringing her back from the nurse. “Do you remember, Saladine?” But Saladine does not answer. No matter! Norette goes on: “So, when we reached the Mas de la Viste, where the whole horizon opens, I, a little savage who had never seen anything but mountains, asked, ‘What is that big blue field?’ ‘The sea,’ Saladine told me. ‘And the

white sheep on it?' 'Those are the ships and their sails.' "

Mademoiselle Norette, a little embarrassed at having made this important speech, to hide her confusion took up the bouquet placed beside her glass, and the simple action so deeply impressed Ganteaume that he dropped a pile of plates—old Varages, almost as delicately decorated as Moustiers—to the despair of Saladine, who was furious at having such an assistant.

The fact is that, from the beginning of the meal, my Ganteaume, poor bewildered page, had done nothing but heap blunder on blunder. And I wonder why—perhaps Mademoiselle Norette knows—a few flowers presented by me possess the strange power of making him so absent-minded.



XXVI

AN EMBASSY

AFTER the meal, Skipper Ruf, leaving Monsieur Honnorat and the abbé to discuss hunting over a bottle of myrtle-berry wine—Saladine's specific for promoting digestion—called me confidentially into a corner.

I thought he wanted, like a good father, to inquire about Ganteaume's behavior and the way the latter discharged the various duties that are supposed to attach him to my person.

Nothing of the sort! Skipper Ruf is charged with an embassy to me.

At the close of the coral campaign, after stopping to embrace his wife as he passed the little Camargue, Skipper Ruf was obliged to push on to Nice to sell, on behalf of the fraternity, the products of the expedition, which were owned in partnership.

As usual, he met some Genoese merchants, who were buying the unpolished coral for the factories, and were lodged, according to custom, at a tavern in the ancient city bearing the sign of "The Antico Limon Verde."

"Heaven save you from those Italian taverns, sir. They smell of cheese and are thick with flies. But you mustn't mind such things, if you want to sell to the Genoese."

At any rate, the bargain was made, and Skipper Ruf, his money tightly fastened in his pouch, was preparing to go after the obligatory drink of *Asti spumante* (a wretched little wine that upsets the stomach and isn't to be compared to our good black-currant ratafia!), when from a table in the darkest corner he heard words, snatches of talk, that made him prick up his ears.

Some plot was being formed. Monsieur Honnorat and Puget-Maure were mentioned—nay, my name and Norette's were repeated several times.

"In my calling of fisherman," Skipper Ruf went on, "which keeps me always in the sunshine on the glittering water, I am not much used to seeing in the dark. Yet, by dint of opening my eyes like the cats, I finally distinguished, among half a dozen bullies who were silently listening, an old fellow in a surtout, who

looked like a juggler or a notary, and a young man with his back turned towards me, whom at first I did not recognize.

“‘We must make an end of it,’ said the young man; ‘after all, the person in question wants to rob us, and thieves must be put out of the way.’

“‘No doubt,’ replied the other, ‘after we have made the requisite outlay and should the thing become necessary. Yet I think, at all hazards, it would be far better to have the person in question act with us.’

“‘But he won’t.’

“‘Perhaps he will.’

“‘No, I shouldn’t desire it now, even if he did.’

“The young man had started up in a furious rage, making the bottles and glasses dance under the heavy blow he dealt the table. I recognized him. It was Galfar, in shiny boots and a new coat, like a man who has just inherited property.

“‘Skipper Ruf?’ ‘Galfar?’ ‘What fair wind brings you to these parts?’ ‘The wind from the Cape; I’m just from the Antibes with the vessel to sell our coral.’ ‘Ah, so much the better!’ ‘And you’re going back?’ ‘To Puget-Maure.’

“At the name of Puget-Maure Galfar cast a dark glance at me. ‘True, I forgot; your little Ganteaume is up there. In that case you must surely know my cousin Honnorat’s suitor. Well, tell him from me that I forbid him—do you understand?—forbid him to marry Norette! And, if you overheard our conversation just now, tell him, too, that it is dangerous for

people to try to enter our families; that the Golden Goat has brought more than one misfortune upon the Gazans and the Galfars, and that if its hoofs, on moonlit nights, leave prints of gold upon the stones, red stains, drops of blood, have also often been found in the places where it has passed.' ”

Skipper Ruf was much excited.

“But what has this to do with Mademoiselle No-rette?” I asked.

“Listen! I don't know whether you want the treasure and are paying court to her on that account. But I formerly heard that the secret is transmitted from mother to daughter in the Gazan and Galfar families, who always intermarry. Mademoiselle No-rette, therefore, would have it from the late Madame Honnorat, her mother, who was a Galfar.

“Now, you know what is to be done,” Skipper Ruf concluded. “I foresaw this. You were warned. What are you seeking in this land of savages? Why not go back to-morrow to little Camargue, where Tar-dive is expecting us; catch, with Ganteaume's help, the castagnore (Saint Peter's fish), and rest quietly at night, free from anxious cares, lulled to sleep by the distant tinkling of the bells of Arlatan?”

XXVII

SENTIMENTAL PERPLEXITIES

SHALL I stay? Or shall I not?

Ought I to listen to Skipper Ruf's wise counsels or to persist in searching for a treasure which, perhaps, may prove visionary?

The alternative perplexes me.

If I leave Puget-Maure, I shall seem—and the thought annoys me—to fear Galfar and fly from his threats. Yet I don't feel especially proud when I think of the farcical part which, in the other case, I should be forced to play.

People here believe that, from motives of interest (yes, interest, since there is a fortune at stake), I am feigning love for Mademoiselle Norette.

I remember the feeling of pity, blended with contempt, I used to bestow, in what we term society, upon people worthy in all other respects, who would not have lied to a man, yet who shamelessly cheated themselves to prove that they loved some insignificant little girl whom they wanted solely for her dowry.

And the hapless fellows ended by believing themselves captivated, like the hired mourners who, dazed

by their own lamentations, actually shed real tears on the grave of a dead person whom they never knew.

Such a course would be extremely repugnant to me, though, after all, with Mademoiselle Norette as mistress and guardian of the Golden Goat, my case would have an indescribably chivalric charm.

Alas! in how short a time we are overmastered.

Here am I, in a state of melancholy at the bare idea of leaving this village with its crooked streets, this old house which has become mine, this Donkey's Passage, whose sharp stones for some time have seemed soft to me.

And Misé Jano, a supernatural vision that appeared in the valley to bid me welcome. And Monsieur Honnorat, and Saladine . . .

I dare not add: and Mademoiselle Norette, lest I should see into my own heart too clearly.

For Mademoiselle Norette is certainly a charming girl. Until yesterday at dinner I had never looked at her, and could not have told whether her eyes were black or blue.

They are black, a velvety black, with brown shadows, somewhat languishing and with a shade of mournful tenderness; the eyes of a happy slave content in her bondage. The beautiful Scheherazade must have had such eyes.

Galfar really pays me a compliment in considering me worthy of their notice, yet I have made little effort to win their favor, nor has Galfar, for that matter.

Strange gallants indeed; both equally ill dressed,

both looking like brigands; his ribbed velvet jacket need not fear comparison with my coarse serge sack.

No matter, blessed be Galfar! But for Galfar and his jealousy I should not yet know Norette.

Norette! How delightful it would be to have this virgin soul wholly one's own.

I feel a thrill of delicious freshness in my heart, an almost physical sensation, as I remember her artless blush and quickened breathing when I offered her the bouquet.

To imagine yourself beloved is the beginning of love. With Norette loving me, it seems as if I shall be unable to help loving Norette.

But how am I to know? I believe I have found a way.

Skipper Ruf is going home to-morrow. I will start with him, as honesty commands.

But if Mademoiselle Norette urges me to stay, if she confesses . . . ah! then I shall simply leave the future to fate. My conscience will be clear. You can't be unkind to a charming girl who loves you, merely on the pretext that she may be the heiress of the King of Majorca's treasures.



XXVIII

IN THE GARDEN

MONSIEUR HONNORAT prides himself on a garden which he owns at the foot of his tower.

A garden? No! A piece of the rock smoothed off, surrounded by a wall, and overhanging the precipice.

The wall keeps within its bounds a little vegetable soil collected in the clefts which, mingled with the bits of the rock itself, friable stones in the act of disintegrating and turning to dust in the sunshine, forms a mould which elsewhere would not suffice to feed the

roots of nettles and briars, but in this favored climate satisfies three orange-trees, a laurel, a border of rosemary, some fruits and vegetables.

The whole is watered by the scanty supply from a cistern, which Monsieur Honnorat husbands very parsimoniously.

As twilight approaches, I come to the parapet of my terrace, with no definite motive save to feast my eyes upon the changing splendors of the horizon glowing in hues of crimson; perhaps, too, because just under the spot I have chosen stands a stone bench shaded by a laurel, where Mademoiselle Norette sometimes likes to sit.

As the afternoon has been burning hot and the flowers drooped, Norette and Saladine dispense the cistern-water very generously, to the despair of Monsieur Honnorat, who protests against it.

Mademoiselle Norette is laughing. Their voices rise in the cool evening air. "When the cock is touched, one would say his blood is being shed," cries Saladine, pointing to Monsieur Honnorat.

And mademoiselle adds:

"Papa sows his beans for the sake of glory, I water them out of pity."

Then Monsieur Honnorat, still disputing with Saladine, goes out, and mademoiselle is left alone.

I come down to the garden.

"I saw you, I was waiting for you," says Norette. She speaks calmly, frankly, with no false shame, as if sure of herself and of me.

But at the first allusion to departure, I saw her

suddenly turn pale, with the dull pallor peculiar to brunettes, which makes them resemble statues.

For an instant I felt alarmed.

Standing motionless, with downcast lashes, doubtless to keep back her tears, little Norette seemed turned to marble. And when she looked at me there was an expression of intense sadness in her swimming eyes.

She silently signed to me to wait, then went to her room, brought back the box of wishes, the symbolic coffer containing her maiden hopes, and having opened and emptied it, showed me, tossed in pell-mell with the egg, the salt, and the distaff, twenty bouquets precisely like the one I gave her, some still fresh, others already withered.

"My flowers, my poor flowers," she sighed. "I was so pleased to find them every morning on this bench, cool and bathed with dew. I warmed them on my heart, knowing they came from you. I thought: he dares not give them to me himself; but he is brave, he is a man, some day courage will come to him. And it did come, for yesterday, in my father's presence, you offered me a bouquet of these very blossoms. And now you are going to leave us! What do you care for our friendship? What are Norette's tears to you?"

Her wrath was melting into weeping, and, without clearly understanding the matter, yet with a thrill of delight, I could not help smiling when I heard Norette, clasped in my arms, exclaim between two sobs, in the tones of her childhood:

"Oh, I'm a miserable girl, and it serves me right for having so dearly loved a man I hardly knew."

What did I reply? I don't know. But when we left the garden Mademoiselle Norette was no longer weeping, and, spite of my amazed denials, it had been proved that it was I who, for twenty days, had dropped a bouquet every evening on Norette's favorite bench.

Satan is evidently meddling with my love-affairs, and this bouquet business covers some bit of deviltry.

Let us not search into it. The better way is to allow matters to take their course. Must we understand things in order to be happy?



XXIX

GANTEAUME'S LOVE-AFFAIRS

YET these bouquets neither dropped from the sky nor grew on the bench!

No one except the Gazans enters the garden, and no one save Ganteaume and me has the key of the terrace.

I am very sure, unless I believe myself to be a somnambulist, that I never threw a bouquet from the top of the tower. No one is left except Ganteaume. Can Ganteaume . . .

I had noticed his admiration of Norette, his eagerness to serve her, and his ill-concealed emotion on washing-day at the sight of the flowers I proffered.

Ganteaume must be the culprit.

I called him. He came, repentant and downcast.

"Oho, Master Ganteaume," I said, "is this the way you understand the duties of a page? Do you think I shall allow a person who is attending me to carry on wretched intrigues in the house which affords us its hospitality?"

The solemnity of such a beginning put the poor fellow entirely out of countenance, and, sobbing bitterly, he confessed a whole series of misdeeds.

While I supposed him to be rambling about the

streets of Puget-Maure with other boys of his own age, fishing for trout in the stream, or, a rare capture, taking a brood of rock-sparrows from the nest, Ganteaume, already ambitious, dreaming of the loftiest destinies, undertook, on his own account, the capture of the Golden Goat.

He has become intimate with Peu-Parle. The old fool honors him with his confidence, and Master Ganteaume, in return, has told him my plans.

Ganteaume in the evening learns the names of the stars; then, sitting among the lavender, he and Peu-Parle hold long conversations about the King of Majorca and the Goat.

Ganteaume firmly believes in the existence of the treasure. He knows, too, from Peu-Parle, curious details of which I was ignorant.

It is really, as I had conjectured, the shadow of a stone, which, at a certain hour of the day and a certain time of the year, marks the spot where the digging must be done.

The treasure itself will not be found there, but a small iron box containing mysterious papers. With these papers success is certain. Only nothing can be done without Mademoiselle Norette, who possesses the talisman on which is graven the secret of the shadow.

"A bell, perhaps?"

"Yes, it seems to me Peu-Parle did say bell."

Ganteaume, however, assures me that he never meant to take entire possession of the treasure. His intention was to divide it into two parts: one for me,

the other for Skipper Ruf. As a reward, the boy would be perfectly content with the happiness of marrying Norette, and being always with her.

It was in the hope of pleasing Norette that, by taking counsel with Peu-Parle, he had devised the gallant attention of the bouquets which Norette had attributed to me.

But Ganteaume will understand henceforward that these dreams cannot be realized. He silently renounced Norette, without a word of complaint, when he saw that she loved me.

Now, disheartened by the melting of his dream, he entreats me to keep him, not to send him home with Skipper Ruf.

Joy is the mother of indulgence; I forgive my fourteen-year-old rival.

He wipes away his tears, and, trying to smile, thanks me.

But Norette evidently has his heart, and the wound still bleeds.

Alas! who would have imagined that Ganteaume, hapless Ganteaume, would be the first victim of the capricious Golden Goat?

XXX

THE QUEEN'S FLOWERS

A DIFFERENT Norette!

As she passes me smiling, alert, and gay, I should hardly recognize the half-peasant girl whose unconscious timidity disguised itself beneath a certain bluntness.

Now Mademoiselle Norette has no shyness. She is perfectly at ease, though Monsieur Honnorat has not been informed of our mutual love; had we been wedded two years her manner would be the same.

This morning she said to me:

"Your flowers are beautiful; I love them, but I know where even more beautiful ones grow."

"More beautiful?"

"The Queen's flowers. Yours are only mountain blossoms. Mine are from the fairy garden an Eastern princess had around her palace."

On winter evenings when, with one stone in their laps and another for a hammer, the girls, singing merrily, crack the bitter almonds, you would hear all sorts of marvellous stories told about the place by the peasant poachers and the women who gather litter and withered leaves.

The garden has become waste-land, and there is nothing left of the once splendid building except a massive black rampart and here and there a few fallen stones. But as soon as the pleasant weather comes flowers, unlike any the people here ever saw, grow up under the ancient rampart between the old stones. They undoubtedly come from those the Queen had in her garden, whose race has been perpetuated up there close to the sky.

"Is it so very high—up there, near the sky?"

"Very high," Norette answered, smiling; "even higher than the Goat's Rock. But where would not people climb to find that *Arabian Nights* flower-garden, with its varied, countless blossoms the color of the sun and the dew, unearthly flowers, that bear no resemblance to the coarser ones blooming in our valley."

"And Mademoiselle Norette does not resemble. . . ."

"No doubt!" Norette answered. "That's the reason we are going this afternoon. Ganteaume will accompany us."

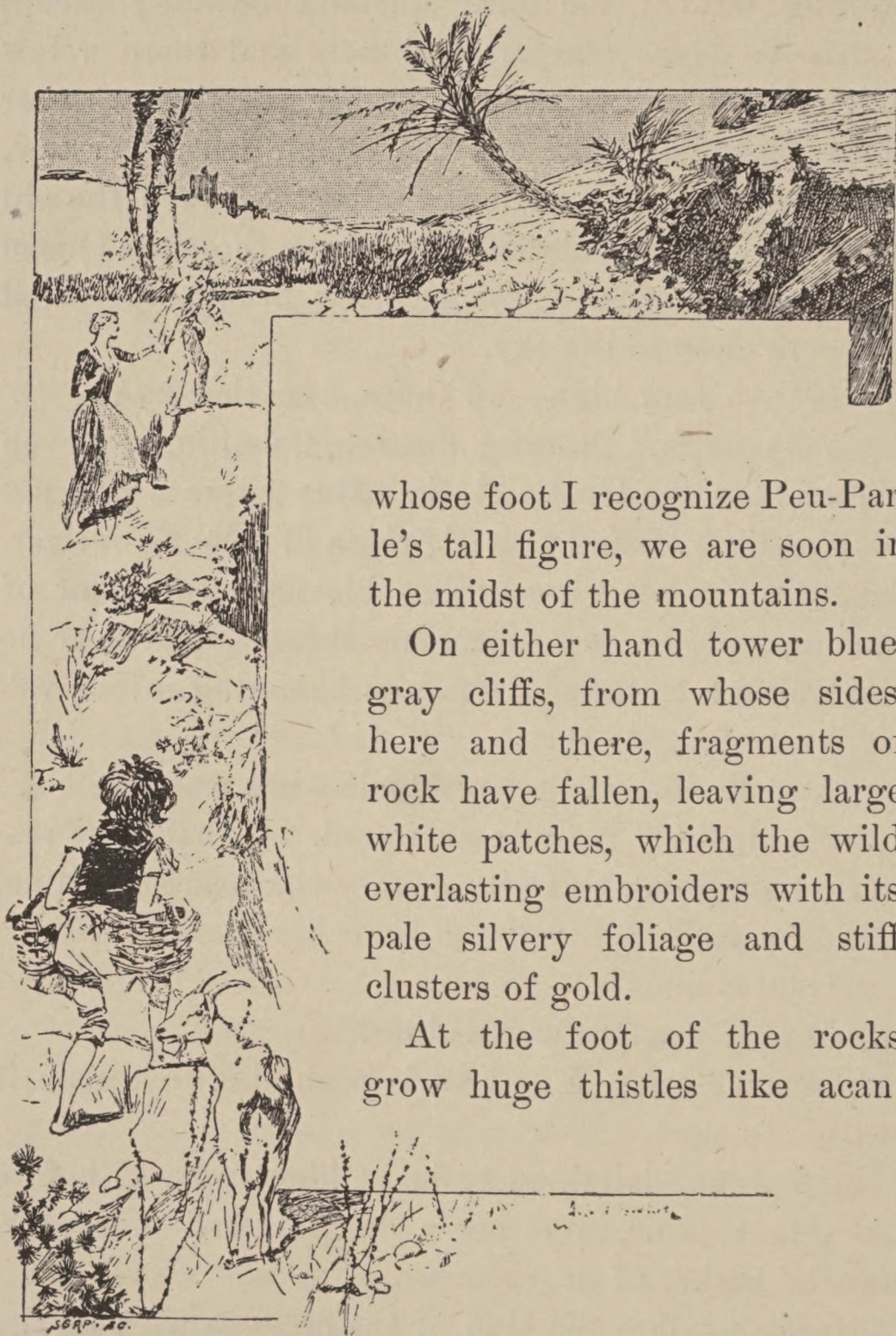
"Ganteaume?"

"Would you prefer Saladine?"

Three o'clock! The heat is beginning to lessen; it is time to start.

Misé Jano, delighted to be at liberty, frisks before us. Ganteaume, in rather a downhearted mood, carries the basket of provisions.

Norette makes the sign of the cross as we pass the cemetery where "the two dead men" sleep, and, leaving on our left the hermitage and the Goat's Rock, at



whose foot I recognize Peu-Parle's tall figure, we are soon in the midst of the mountains.

On either hand tower blue-gray cliffs, from whose sides, here and there, fragments of rock have fallen, leaving large white patches, which the wild everlasting embroiders with its pale silvery foliage and stiff clusters of gold.

At the foot of the rocks grow huge thistles like acan-

thus plants, juniper-bushes with violet berries, gnarled carob-trees, whose dark foliage is adorned by pods shining as if they were varnished, and pines whose low boughs, cut by the hatchet, weep amber tears in the sunshine.

The whole scene, amid the penetrating odor of rosemary and lavender, is hushed into silence so profound that it is scarcely broken by the song of a bird—shrill and clear in harmony with the landscape—and the noise of countless empty snail-shells which, covering the path, crush and snap under our tread.

Ganteaume and Misé Jano are in front. Norette and I walk silently side by side, hand clasped in hand. Sometimes, turning, dazzled by the light, we see between the straight trunks of the pine-trees beyond the scorched mountain-sides the blue waves of the sea.

“Here we are; let us have lunch first!” cries Norette.

Gauteaume unpacks the provisions, we spread them on the grass; and for a few seconds an appetite fairly earned during the rough though picturesque ascent makes us forget our love-perplexities.

“Now, while I pick my flowers, you will be free to gaze at the landscape.”

And Norette, ever charming and mischievous, bursts into a merry laugh.

I raise my head, but the landscape has disappeared. . . . A provoking fog, which at this season creeps up the mountain slopes, has slyly enveloped us. A beautiful fog, it is true, a genuine Provençal one, white,

clear, light as gauze, and shimmering with sunbeams. Coming upon us in little eager clouds, it none the less hides the view, and below, close at hand, the wind bears to us the crowing of the cocks in the farm-yards, the continuous beating of the waves.

It is pleasant to know that we are alone.

In fact, the fog gradually increasing, we are merged in a luminous atmosphere of mother-of-pearl and opal, in which Norette grows taller, as though transfigured, and against whose background, two paces distant, a few grass-stalks and the silhouette of a fig-tree, rooted on the edge of the precipice, stand forth with singular distinctness.

Suddenly Norette kneels near the fig-tree, and, bending forward, calls me. I arrived in time to lift her for an instant, laughing and trembling, in my arms.

“Oh, Ganteaume; how frightened I was!”

Happy because she had been rescued by me, still startled by the slight peril, and not knowing how to express this complex emotion, she bravely, eagerly, listening only to the dictates of her heart, embraces—Master Ganteaume.

And the kiss, while pleasing Norette, made two other people happy: Ganteaume, who had received it, and I, who knew it had been indirectly meant for me.

XXXI

SAINT SARAH

“WELL,” continued Norette, “that’s nothing, since I have my bouquet. Come, Ganteaume, give me the ribbon, the candle, the square of red cloth. And now we mustn’t lose another minute if we want to go through the Saracen’s Pass. Ganteaume, call Misé Jano. Luckily the fog doesn’t extend very low down, and I know the right path.”

In fact, the fog was only a narrow, straight line intersecting the mountain. A few steps carried us across it, and while its light mists were still surrounding Misé Jano and Ganteaume, Norette and I were already in the light and sunshine.

What is this Saracen’s Pass to which Norette is leading me? For Norette, I perceive, is beginning to lead me according to her will, and my friends, who have known my independence, would be amused to see me, in honor of the Golden Goat, obedient to the caprices of a little peasant maid. But during the last four days, since the episode of the bouquet, have I thought solely of this Golden Goat?

Norette deigns to explain that the Saracen’s Pass is a narrow ravine, closing from the side of the sea

the most important of the three valleys leading to Puget-Maure. It was formerly the scene of many a battle, and the remains of barricades can still be seen projecting from the rocks.

“Perhaps this will interest you, Sir Scholar.”

But there is nothing specially archæological about our excursion in Norette’s plan. The Saracen’s Pass opens almost on level ground half a kilometre from the road leading to Fréjus. The place, though wild and lonely, is accessible by carts, and the gypsies, with their caravans on wheels, are glad to turn aside there for a halt when, at the change of season, they are on their way to winter-quarters.

The gypsies have come and are expecting Norette, who has notified them and has a most important commission. As they are going to Our-Lady-of-the-Sea, Norette will give them the bouquet tied with ribbon and the candle to place on the tomb of Saint Sarah.

“Saint Sarah?”

“Have you never heard of Saint Sarah, the faithful servant of the three Marys, who, having come with them to Provence, after the death of Christ, in a boat which had neither sails nor oars, died near Mary Jacob and Mary Salome, at the island of Camargue, between the two Rhônes, while Mary Magdalen was weeping in the desert?”

“From Aygues-Mortes to Fos, along the gulf around the great ponds, there is not a sailor, not a fisherman, not a herdsman, not a driver of mares, who does not know the legend. Ever since that time Mary Jacob and Mary Salome have occupied an ærial chapel in

the superb church Provence has erected to them, whence can be seen—my father took me there when I was a little girl—endless shores and the sea.

“Saint Sarah, disdained, contents herself with an humble crypt where the gypsies alone—or almost alone—pay her reverence, because, they say, she was of their race and color.”

We approached the encampment, now almost deserted, the men and all the boys over ten years old having gone on an expedition early in the morning. Only one old woman had been left to boil the water in the pot, look after the horse, and watch half a dozen babies, as black as coal, who were rolling naked in the grass.

Mademoiselle Norette's business, however, is with the old woman.

She has given her the bit of scarlet stuff, and instantly—for where will not coquetry find a nest?—the crone has pinned it upon the waist of her dress. Then they sit down and talk, glancing towards me, while the youngest and most curly-headed of the little urchins, lying on its back, suckles Misé Jano, clinging to her golden hair, and the others attack the fragments of provisions left in Ganteaume's basket. Afterwards all of them, even the nursling, come and beg a few pinches of tobacco to cram into their pipes, already colored, and to roll into cigarettes.

The old woman has told us:

“Be not afraid; ere a week has passed the candle will burn upon the tomb near the flowers whose seeds came from the East, and, to win her favor for you, I

shall have spoken in an unknown tongue the words Saint Sarah loves to hear."

Then addressing me, she adds: "All good-fortune is your due."

Turning to Norette she continues, with a gentleness of tone and touches of flattery somewhat surprising from the lips of a traditional sorceress:

"The young lady of Puget-Maure is so noble, so beautiful! Beautiful and brown as Sarah, noble as the princess whose flowers she has brought me. If she desired, we would make her queen—but she does not, her fate is elsewhere—we would make her queen in the Village of the Saints, according to our custom, within the circle of our wagons, on a throne in the open air, adorned with gold and diamonds. And the people would admire her, and, seeing her thus, the guardians of Camargue, drawing the bridles of their white steeds, would long and turn pale. . . ."

The old crone showed no disposition to stop.

"Let us go," says Norette, pretending to laugh, but evidently embarrassed in my presence by this flood of enigmatical words.

The sun had disappeared. We must hasten to reach Puget-Maure before nightfall.

Meanwhile Norette, visibly excited, was telling me that her name was Sarah, like her mother's, and Saint Sarah was their patron saint. She felt happier now, secure of Saint Sarah's favor in behalf of something she did not utter in words, but which her eyes, though averted each time they met mine, enabled me to divine.

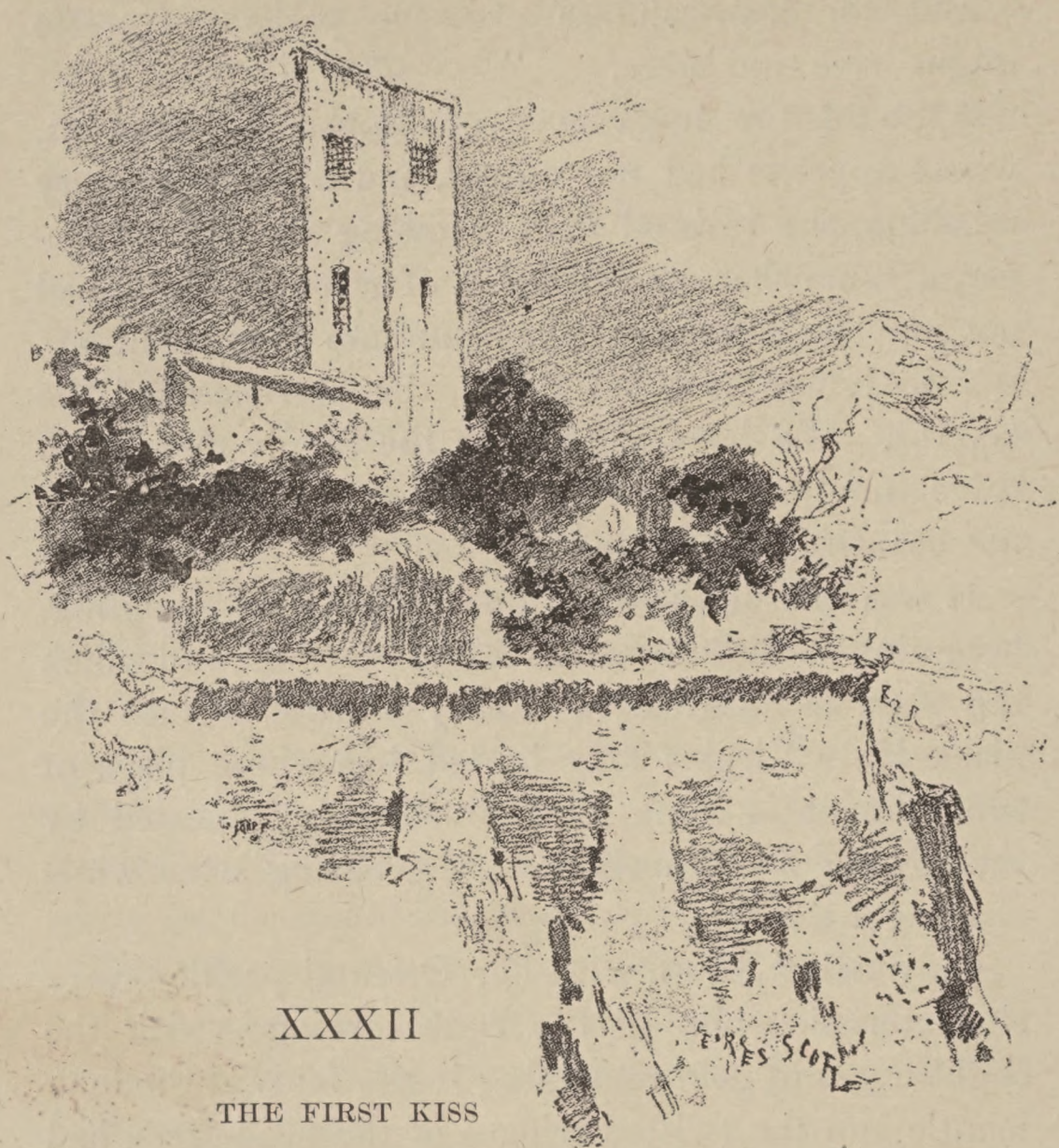
But for Ganteaume's presence perhaps Norette might have said more.

Spite of the impatience of Monsieur Honnorat, whose appetite had not waited, and Saladine's angry rebellion, she insisted upon showing me, before dinner, a somewhat shapeless bit of wood which I had not previously noticed in her museum of mementos.

"See! here is Saint Sarah, the patroness of the Gazans. We have had her in the family more than three hundred years. Revere her, at least. She is not beautiful, but I love her."

It was one of those antique images whose gilding, becoming oxidized, assumes shades of ebony, and which the popular imagination readily transforms into the black Holy Virgins long buried, but whose place of concealment is some day miraculously indicated by the lowing and kneeling of the toiling oxen while clearing a thicket.

Only Saint Sarah, with her Oriental profile—very characteristic, spite of the rude carving—with the slight traces of gold remaining in the folds of the long mantle and the twisted fringes of the head-dress, had a somewhat Pagan air, which Holy Virgins usually do not possess, and looked like a Sultana who might have resembled Norette.



XXXII

THE FIRST KISS

It would be prudent to go, and Skipper Ruf was right. Every night, unable to sleep, I have agreed with him.

Things are moving too rapidly to suit me. Norette is too dangerously frank. The declivity of our love-affair, should my imagination lag, is likely to end in marriage.

This is where the Golden Goat would lead me.

Yet, by a strange contradiction, having taken it

into my head to make Norette love me on account of the Golden Goat, since she has done so I have forgotten the Golden Goat and think only of Norette.

Overlooking the sentimental business of the bouquets, overlooking Saint Sarah and the gypsy betrothal, something more serious happened yesterday.

The moonlight was magnificent, and we lingered in the garden late into the evening. Norette and I were sitting on the stone bench. Monsieur Honnorat, with his back turned to us, was smoking his pipe and thinking, with both elbows resting on the top of the little wall.

We were talking in low tones on indifferent subjects, as lovers talk, divining emotion beneath the flood of idle words.

Norette's teeth glittered. I was thinking with vague jealousy—love consists of such follies—of the childish kiss whose sweetness Ganteaume knew.

I ought to have distrusted myself. But I felt perfectly safe, since Monsieur Honnorat was there and the moon was guarding us.

Suddenly Monsieur Honnorat cried in his loud, good-natured voice:

"See! The moon is passing behind Eagle Peak; we shall lose it for five minutes."

The whole garden was shrouded in darkness as though a curtain had fallen. We ceased talking; Norette's hand sought mine.

When, gradually unmasked, the full moon again appeared, I had no longer cause to be jealous of Ganteaume.



Yes! It would be wise to go.

But everything seems to conspire against me: the moon, after the fog, and the mistral, after the moon.

This morning, as I was preparing—having firmly resolved upon my departure—to cross the square to

settle my bill at The Seafaring Bacchus, I ran against Saladine, who was hurriedly bolting the door of the Donkey's Passage, which usually stood wide open.

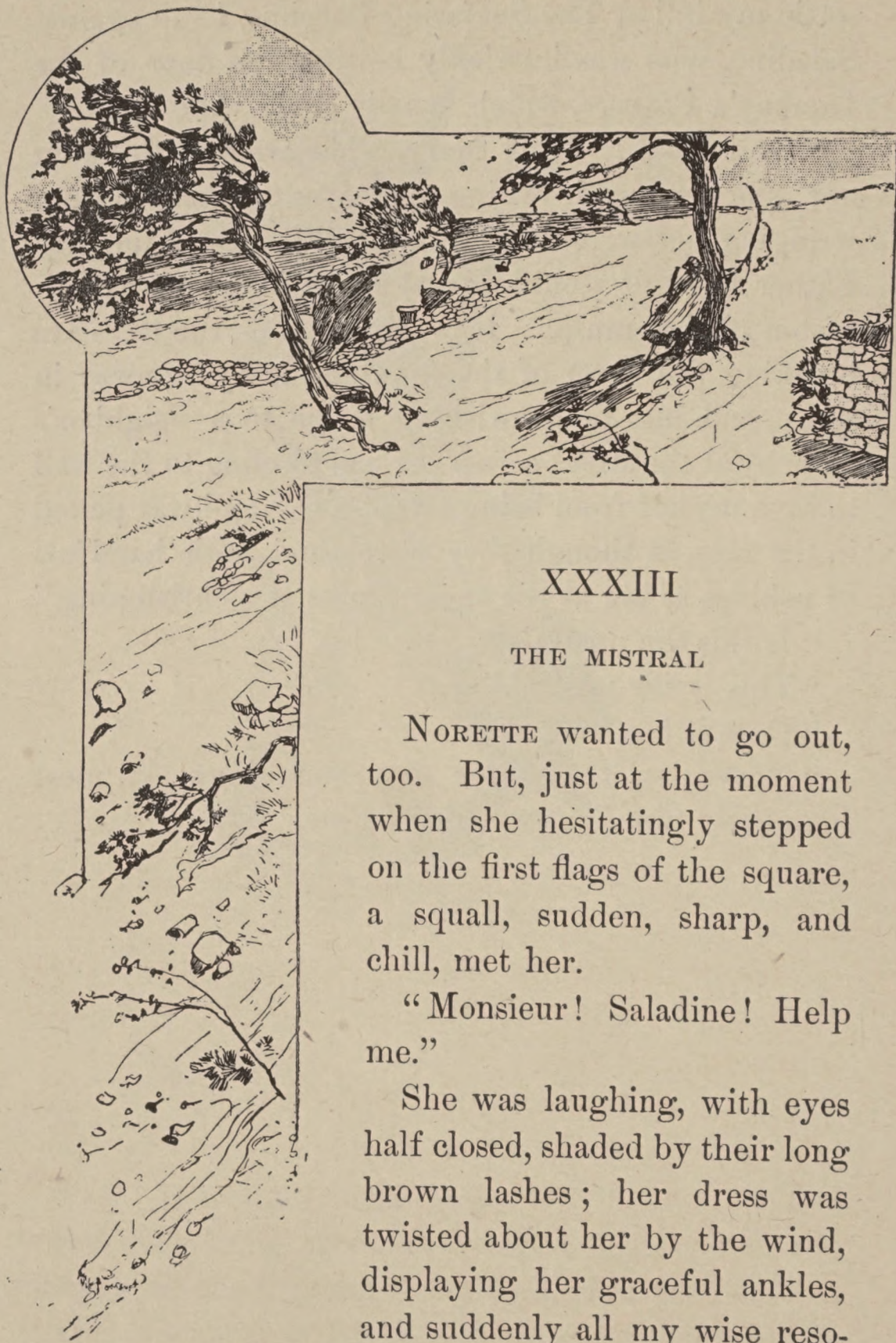
"Going out? Holy Mary, what are you thinking of?" she screamed, raising her eyes to heaven and wringing her wrinkled hands. "Why, the Almighty Father Himself would stay at home in such weather. Listen to that music. It is raining tiles, the trees are breaking, the water of the fountains is flying away in spray, and just now—wishing to go to a neighbor's close by at the street corner—I had to cling to the wall to save myself from being swept away, and was pelted in the face, as though they were sand, with handfuls of pebbles as big as the sugar-plums at a christening."

"Is this the mistral?"

"This is the mistral."

"Does it last long?"

"Never less than three days, sometimes six, most frequently nine," answered Saladine.



XXXIII

THE MISTRAL

NORETTE wanted to go out, too. But, just at the moment when she hesitatingly stepped on the first flags of the square, a squall, sudden, sharp, and chill, met her.

“Monsieur! Saladine! Help me.”

She was laughing, with eyes half closed, shaded by their long brown lashes; her dress was twisted about her by the wind, displaying her graceful ankles, and suddenly all my wise resolutions flew away like the spray from the fountains

and the stone sugar-plums that pelted worthy Saladine.

“Let us go to the third story, and there, safely sheltered, watch the mistral blow.”

“Shall we hear it, too?”

“Have no fears on that score. It will take good care to make itself heard, even without being entreated to do so.”

The sky was blue, the hard, uniform blue of a gem, but no birds flew across it, and before the town-hall the ancient poplar of '48, shaking its shining leaves, bowed down to the very ground before his majesty, the mistral.

At times the wind died away and the poplar stood motionless. Then, after an interval of deep silence, far away in the distance came a low roar like the surf, rising and swelling and rushing upon us like the assault of viewless billows breaking, as though against a cliff, upon the little tower on its rock.

“All night long I could not sleep,” said Norette; “I was thinking of the poor people at sea.”

This suggestion, the bare thought of Skipper Ruf alone in his boat in such weather, brought Ganteaume to the verge of tears.

Twice, after the third and sixth day, this obstinate mistral renewed the attack, and, for nine days, prisoners of the wind, guarded by the tempest, Norette and I enjoyed the pleasures of a perpetual tête-à-tête, all the more delightful because we had not planned it.

Thanks to the mistral, all the customs of the household were upset.

Nothing was seen of Saladine, who, unnerved and unable to keep quiet anywhere, ran all day long from kitchen to garret, like an old cat excited by the wind, and made her appearance only at meals.

Spite of the season and the bright sunbeams streaming through the windows, the atmosphere was chilly—a provoking, paradoxical chilliness that irritated the nerves. Monsieur Honnorat, silent and querulous, sat from morning till night before a big fire of vine-cuttings, busily nursing some indescribable imaginary malaria contracted in Senegal and brought back by the mistral; personally affronted because the accursed wind seemed bent on pursuing him into his own house, finding its way in through the chimney, blowing the ashes into the room, and beating the bright flames down upon the crossbar of the andirons.

Ganteaume, profiting by the general confusion, starts at a certain hour and disappears for the whole afternoon. He goes, as I made him confess, his pockets filled with stones to keep the wind from blowing him away, to visit his friend Peu-Parle on the mountain.

Happy Ganteaume! He is always thinking of the Golden Goat, and it comforts him a little for the loss of Norette.

For me, I am thinking only of Norette. I am ready to remain thus, far from everything in the world, with no regrets so long as it pleases the goblins of the air to make an uproar round our enchanted tower.

Sometimes, when the gale redoubles its fury, Norette and I, sitting side by side, feel as though everything was on the point of being swept away, the walls sway



and shake, and we possess the illusion of being alone, calm and undismayed, amid the surges, in a shipwreck free from peril.

Almost every day at about one o'clock there is a lull.

Then we take refuge on my terrace. I know a corner where the tempest cannot reach. The sun shines warmly, but all nature is still quivering, and whirlwinds of white dust chase one another along the lonely roads.

The mistral soon returns, however, in all its fury. How is the terrace to be crossed? Norette, pretending to be afraid, clings mirthfully to my arm.

One morning the mistral no longer blew.

The sea was azure in the distance, and the foliage of the trees was motionless.

The glad voices of women and children floated upward from the street, and high above, near the roofs, against the wind-swept sky, flocks of martens, darting through the sunshine in frantic circles, uttered strident cries that sounded like the swish of the sickle cutting ripe wheat.

"Released at last?"

"Alas, yes, Mademoiselle Norette; but I would fain have my imprisonment last forever."

The nine days' dream was over; reality was about to claim me.

Robinson Crusoe was startled to find a footprint on the sand of what he believed to be a desert island; I experienced that very day an equally disagreeable sensation; for having gone out to take a walk, the

first person I met was Galfar, newly clad from top to toe, his beard trimmed as Skipper Ruf had described, but still followed by his dog and with his everlasting gun on his shoulder.

I must state, however, that when I bowed to him Monsieur Galfar deigned to return my salute.



XXXIV

CARDS ON THE TABLE

THE day had another surprise in store.

I had scarcely passed through the ancient gate-way of the village when I heard some one running after me. It was Ganteaume, panting for breath and very eager.

“A gentleman is waiting for you at the tavern—an old gentleman who wears spectacles. He wants to speak to you; I think it’s about the Golden Goat.”

“You have been troubling your head a little too much about the Golden Goat, friend Ganteaume. Besides, what should prevent the gentleman with spectacles from coming to my lodgings to see me?”

“I said so to him, but he prefers . . .”

“Very well; go on, I’ll follow you.”

The personage who awaited me was no other than the worthy Monsieur Blaise Pascal, citizen of Monte Carlo, and sworn professor of *trente et quarante* and *roulette*.

The old fool talked to me in the most sensible way.

“Let us play with our cards on the table. I might bear you a grudge, being convinced that, but for my proposal six months ago, and the imprudent words

that escaped Galfar while intoxicated, you would never, alone, have found the track of the Golden Goat. You say no. So much the better. I was reluctant to believe you capable of an unhandsome act. Let us admit that chance alone led you here—it is possible; I believe in chance—and that a series of other chances, interpreted by reflection, has finally made you acquainted with a portion of our secret.

“But it is none the less true that Galfar, with some semblance of logic, accuses you of having stolen the secret from him. It is none the less true that Galfar, who also wished to wed her, will strain every nerve to prevent the marriage of which you are dreaming with his cousin Norette.

“Yet, in regard to this last point, I will undertake, on certain conditions, to make Galfar listen to reason.

“Why not go into partnership with us? What you know, we know, too: the shadow marking the spot where the casket is buried; the papers or parchments contained in this casket revealing in their turn the entrance, concealed by a moving stone, to the caves where the treasure lies. What you lack, we lack, too: it is—you see I am playing, as I promised, with the cards face up on the table—it is a silver bell, resembling a talisman, which you held in your hand an instant (don’t deny it; Ganteaume told Peu-Parle and Peu-Parle repeated the story to me), and instantly gave up because you were then ignorant of its value, for you did not even think for an instant of copying the curious inscription it bears. Come, now, to prove my good faith, I’ll tell you that this inscription is

simply Greek written reversed in Arabic characters, or Arabic written in Greek, according to the simple methods of old cryptographs. To decipher it would be a trifle. But, in order to decipher it, it must be in our possession, and the sole way of obtaining it is by becoming the husband of Mademoiselle Norette.

“Now, if you wish to know why such a treasure has remained inviolate so long, and why—their wives holding the secret—the Galfars and the Gazans, rather than touch it, have let their battlements and towers crumble into decay, I will reply that there is a mysterious reason, and if I knew it perhaps I might not need your assistance.

“If you wish to know, also, how I have learned all these things, I will tell you that Galfar confided them to me one morning when I was returning from Africa, and he, with bare feet, was washing the deck of the steamer.

“He had it from family traditions. ‘To think,’ he exclaimed, pointing with his wet mop to a village on the coast, shining white on the summit of a cliff, the very village where we are—‘to think that I am here scrubbing planks, with my legs in the water, when up there, with a little money and a little help, I might be master of a countless treasure in a fortnight.’

“I listened to Galfar; I am a practical man. I found the money for him, and put him in a position to pay court to Norette, but he did not succeed. What would one expect from a plain sailor? Then I thought of taking you into the plan. Not being a practical man, you committed the mistake of refusing. Accept

now, and no time will have been lost. As enemies we shall injure each other; as friends, success is certain. We will divide the riches into thirds; you marry Norette, and I'll give my daughter—for I have a fair-haired daughter, with a talent for music—to Gal-far."

This devil of a fellow, with his eloquence, almost succeeded in tempting me.

While he was speaking I fancied I saw the shadow cast by the rock, the hole, the casket; then, behind the turning stone, the narrow cavern of the legends, peopled with numberless bats, whose silent flight seemed like the movement of phantoms; and doors, doors, doors, bristling with nails, garlanded—oh, marvels of wrought-iron!—with defensive ornaments of Arabic design. Above all, I fancied I saw the last retreat, the cavern with no opening beyond, crammed, as *Peu-Parle* described it to *Ganteaume*, with diamonds and "bars of gold."

What a beautiful dream to realize! What a renewal of broad, free life! For, after all, this pretended civilization, so refined yet so mercenary, fetters the hands, clogs the limbs while enlarging the brain, and by rude indigence prisons our poor bodies in a corner, while the spirit, bound to the flesh, suffers from being unable to take its flight and realize the divine on earth.

Unfortunately, just at the moment I was allowing myself to be thus borne away on the wings of the chimera, *Monsieur Blaise* had the vexatious inspiration to spread on the table before me—taking them,

too, out of an abominably dirty portfolio — three stamped papers, our contracts, drawn up in advance and requiring nothing but the signatures.

I was ashamed for the Golden Goat, humiliated for Norette, to see them thus made the objects of a bargain.

“Enough, Monsieur Blaise,” I replied; “whether the matter in question concerns the King of Majorca’s treasures or the love of Mademoiselle Norette, or both together, I value them sufficiently to desire to obtain them for myself alone.”

“So you refuse?”

“I refuse.”

“Then it is war.”

“War let it be!”

“I’ve done what I could; I wash my hands of it,” Monsieur Blaise concluded, gazing at me with the sorrowful, pitying expression we cannot help assuming when we look at lunatics.



XXXV

WAR IS DECLARED

IT really *is* war!

In a few days, by making skilful use of Ganteaume's imprudences and Peu-Parle's senseless chatter, Galfar and the estimable Monsieur Blaise have managed to set all Puget-Maure against me.

They had no difficult task with this population of free, proud peasants, ready to dream of treasures during the leisure hours secured by a life of Oriental semi-indolence; all of them, too, more or less engaged in powder-making or poaching, and with whom, in sudden fits of passion, a mere nothing awakens the blood of the old pirates.

They were accustomed to live in poverty under

their olive-trees and among their ravines, consoling themselves, like Peu-Parle, with the idea that, after all, they might call themselves rich.

The illusion gilded their poverty and made them look down upon the inhabitants of other villages.

Each one dimly, vaguely, hoped that some day, while clearing an arid table-land covered with tufts of blossoming lavender, two or three lucky strokes of a pick-axe might reveal the entrance of the fairy cavern. Which of them did not remember, while upon the watch, having heard the bleating of the Goat and the tinkle of its clear bell?

Let the Goat continue, as of yore, to sleep on a litter of gold in the depths of its unknown retreat, and let the King of Majorca's sequins and ingots remain under the earth forever; they are content; they admit it, without desiring anything more.

But that I, a stranger, should come to steal them all, and seize the traditional heritage of Puget-Maure, instantly creates a scandal, kindles hatred, and unchains covetousness.

I am watched, suspected.

In the streets I see at every turn hostile looks and gestures. Women point at me as they whisper together. The children do not yet insult me, but already forget to greet me.

In the fields there is not a corner of the wall, not a tree-trunk, not a clump of cactus, whence I do not imagine that sullen, threatening eyes are watching me when I go out to walk, and I no longer carry my gun solely as a pretext.

Even the curé, worthy Abbé Sèbe, from love of peace, holds aloof.

Peu-Parle alone does not fear to remain my friend.

Ganteaume, spite of my cautions to be prudent, goes to see him every day in his wilderness, and, talking with him about the Golden Goat, grows excited over the old man's oracular visionary maunderings.

But yesterday Ganteaume, caught by the storm that has burst upon me, came home terribly bruised after a battle with pebble-stones, bravely sustained against an ambuscade of the village boys.

Mademoiselle Norette bandaged his wounds.

I have grown sad in recalling Galfar's words: "There is blood, there are scarlet drops mingled with the traces of gold the Goat leaves on the rocks."

Ganteaume, his wounds bandaged by Norette, was radiant with happiness.

XXXVI

THE TWO DEAD MEN

I ACCUSED the curé wrongfully. But this visit will not produce the effect the worthy man hopes, for he wanted to induce me to renounce the treasure, and has succeeded only in making me more certain of its existence.

I was in my room, in the act of rummaging among my papers, when, approaching the window, I saw Abbé Sèbe emerge from the little door of the parsonage, glance cautiously around as though afraid of being watched, then look towards the tower and bend his steps in my direction.

During the half hour before the close of day the streets and alleys are deserted. Shut up in their houses, above whose roofs the smoke is rising, the women are preparing supper, while the men have not yet returned from the fields. Abbé Sèbe could pay me a visit without meeting any one.

In a few minutes some one knocks. It is the abbé, evidently excited and confused. He is breathless, panting after coming up two flights of stairs—a man who could climb the steepest hills without losing breath—and his hat, clutched in both hands, assumed extraordinary shapes.

To put him at ease I offered him a glass of myrtle brandy. He sits down and we drink together; only then does he venture to speak.

"See," he cried, "through Ganteaume's fault two men who like and respect each other are prevented from meeting."

This beginning amazed me.

"Why shouldn't we meet, my dear abbé; and, besides, what can the ingenuous Ganteaume have to do with the matter?"

"Ganteaume! So you are ignorant of his last exploit. You don't know that, having become old Peu-Parle's disciple, and sharing all his follies, he tried day before yesterday to summon the devil at midnight in a spot where four roads meet. Don't deny it. I surprised him, conjuring book in hand, standing in the centre of a ring between three candles. I was returning, my clerk lighting the way with a lantern, from the mass of Truphémus, whither I had gone to carry the host. Ganteaume was shouting, gesticulating—"

"And the devil did not come?"

"No; but at the bare sight of my shadow, the mere glimpse of the lantern, Ganteaume, seized with frantic terror, left his candles there and ran to the village. I ordered the little clerk to say nothing about the matter. Unluckily he tattled. So, thanks to Ganteaume, after being compromised already as a treasure-seeker, you are in a fair way to pass for a sorcerer. At the bakehouse, the washing-place, the fountain, wherever two gossips meet, nothing is talked of ex-

cept you. And I'm brought in, too, alas! for, having attempted to defend you, people already suspect me of being in the dark conspiracy you have plotted against the Golden Goat."

The abbé laughed, then suddenly growing grave, added:

"Listen; by virtue of my office, of my cassock, I am responsible for the peace of the village, and the state of affairs here during the last few days has affected me very painfully.

"I am not accusing you, but myself; I ought to have kept silence on the subject of the inscription at the hermitage; I ought to have concealed the Gazans' memoirs from you. But, since the mischief is done, it will be better for you to know all.

"I will not say for your own sake, but for the sake of Monsieur Honnorat, of Mademoiselle Norette, go, give up the Golden Goat. You can return later, in six months or a year, when prejudices have disappeared and wrath is appeased.

"You have a right to risk your own peace for hopes which may prove chimerical, but not that of others. Now Galfar is capable of everything, and a crime will not stand in his way."

I wanted to interrupt the abbé. But he had taken the book from among my papers, and went on:

"If you only knew! The Golden Goat has always brought misfortune on the Gazan family; that is why they never speak of it and no one mentions it to them. You must have noticed that many pages in this volume are missing. I, myself, at the entreaty of

the dying Madame Honnorat, tore out and burned them all to destroy the last traces of a tragedy now almost forgotten, but whose sanguinary memory long rose like a wall of hate between the Galfars and the Gazans. All the pages? No. Before confiding the book to me Madame Honnorat, with trembling hands, aided by Norette, then a girl twelve years old, tore out one, which she kept. Did it, perhaps, contain the secret of the treasure? Does Mademoiselle Norette still possess it? That matters little. These are family secrets which it is not my place to penetrate.

“But in view of the adventure in which you seem to wish to engage, it is my duty to tell you—as an example—the story as it was related in the pages I destroyed.

“About the year 1500 two cousins, one a Gazan, the other a Galfar, were rivals for the hand of a cousin. Not that they loved her! True, she was a splendid beauty; but both were poor, having ruined themselves, the older in playing his pranks at sea, the younger—on the pretext of studying medicine—in the gambling-houses of Avignon, so it was the secret of the treasure that they specially desired to win from her.

“Neither would yield. They quarrelled, and the younger struck the older one.

“Then, unseen, they went one evening, like Cain and Abel, to the mountains near the chapel which, even at that time, a hermit had in charge.

“In the middle of the night this hermit thought he dreamed that some one was knocking loudly at his

door, and on awakening he heard a cry: 'Help! I have killed my brother.' Then, going out, he saw by the starlight, stretched on the grass in the cemetery, a young man whose head was supported by a gentleman, somewhat older but remarkably like him.

"As the youth was dying the hermit confessed him. When he was dead the other, who stood leaning against the wall, said: 'Father, it is high time that you should confess me, too.' Then the hermit, turning, saw on his blood-stained doublet the hilt of a long poniard which he had buried in his breast. When he had made his confession, the wounded man drew out the blade and lay down on the turf beside the other, whose hair and eyes he kissed amid his tears.

"In the morning, when it was time to bury them, they were found clasped in so close an embrace that it would have been necessary to break their arms to separate the bodies. They were laid together, without a coffin, in the same grave, and a mass was instituted for the souls of the two dead men.

"I shall celebrate the mass day after to-morrow, the anniversary," the abbé concluded.

"Ganteaume and I will attend devoutly, that the people may cease to believe us to be sorcerers."

"Then you are not going away?"

"No, indeed! Not even after this touching tale."

"As you please. But it is not wise to tempt God."



XXXVII

SALADINE AND THE PIEDMONTESE

THE abbé seems very tragic.

Yet the excitement in the village is uncomfortable, and Galfar's ways are beginning to occupy my thoughts.

If only Norette continues to believe me sincerely in love with her and is not aware of my flirtations with the Golden Goat! But the abbé relieves my mind on that score. No one will speak of the Golden Goat in Norette's presence. Besides, even in case of any indiscretion, the natural manner of our meeting, my indifference when I found the bell, my way

of restoring it, the silence I have maintained since, would sufficiently attest my innocence.

Galfar, after an absence of several days, has just returned, bringing in his train a trio of perfect brigands—the men, no doubt, with whom Skipper Ruf had surprised him in conference at the tavern of The Antico Limon Verde.

Having, perhaps, decided to search for the treasure on the insufficient data he possesses in common with Monsieur Blaise, does he intend to employ them in digging? In that case he would not be wrong, for these Piedmontese, with their hangdog faces, are sturdy and capable laborers when the point in question is to excavate the earth or make acquaintance with the rocks.

Or does he intend—and judging solely by their faces he has made no bad selection in that case also—to use them for some dark enterprise? Meanwhile, their sole occupation is to hold endless conferences at The Seafaring Bacchus, Galfar presiding, to play *morra* from morning till night, shouting “*tré! cinque!*” holding their fingers spread wide open before their faces and making the knives—put on the tables according to custom beside each player—dance with the heavy blows of their fists.

Galfar has also brought with him a donkey—named, like its predecessor, Saladin, for the purpose of affronting Saladine—which, with the three Piedmontese, he keeps in his stable at the end of the passage. A nice little brown donkey, quite ignorant, I am certain, of the double part Galfar is making him play.

For Galfar has brought suit against luckless Monsieur Honnorat to compel the repair of the Donkey's Passage, on the pretext that the pavement is uneven, and Saladin's hoofs are tender; then, the lawsuit gained, off goes Saladin, with the panniers of *esparto* grass across his pack-saddle, to seek for sand and rounded pebbles in the bed of the torrent.

At present Saladin goes and comes philosophically by the steep path under the narrow gate-way of the village to hasten the repairs supposed to be in his honor, but with which he could have easily dispensed, and the paviers do the paving at their ease, without



hurrying themselves—like people who, on the contrary, are anxious to make the job last.

Our dwelling, once so peaceful, has become uninhabitable.

Disturbed in his pleasant Moslem repose, irritated every time he goes in or comes out by having to climb over the barricades, Monsieur Honnorat shuts himself up in his own room and smokes desperately, hiding his apoplectic fury in a cloud of tobacco.

Saladine, ironically pursued by the tormenting “gee, Saladin!” makes her appearance as rarely as possible.

But Norette, haughty and contemptuous, after having defended her cause with a lawyer’s coolness before the justice of the peace, watches and directs the paviors.

“Whoever pays has a right to the work,” she says, without troubling herself about the lofty airs of Galfar, who, moreover, becomes singularly timid in her presence. When any domestic matters claim her attention she gives up her place to Ganteaume, who, proud of his office, stations himself on a pile of sand in an attitude which combines prudence with dignity.

I am uneasy, though feigning indifference. To say nothing of Galfar, I don’t like to have those three bullies quartered in the house where Norette sleeps.

XXXVIII

A DOUBLE SHOT

It is evident that I make Galfar uncomfortable.

The worthy powder-manufacturer has found a way of showing it that is certainly unusual.

I had gone out hunting early in the morning, partly from idleness, partly from bravado, to prove to myself that the secret threats of the Puget conspirators did not alarm me, and also with the intention of escaping the complaints with which Monsieur Honorat overwhelmed me.

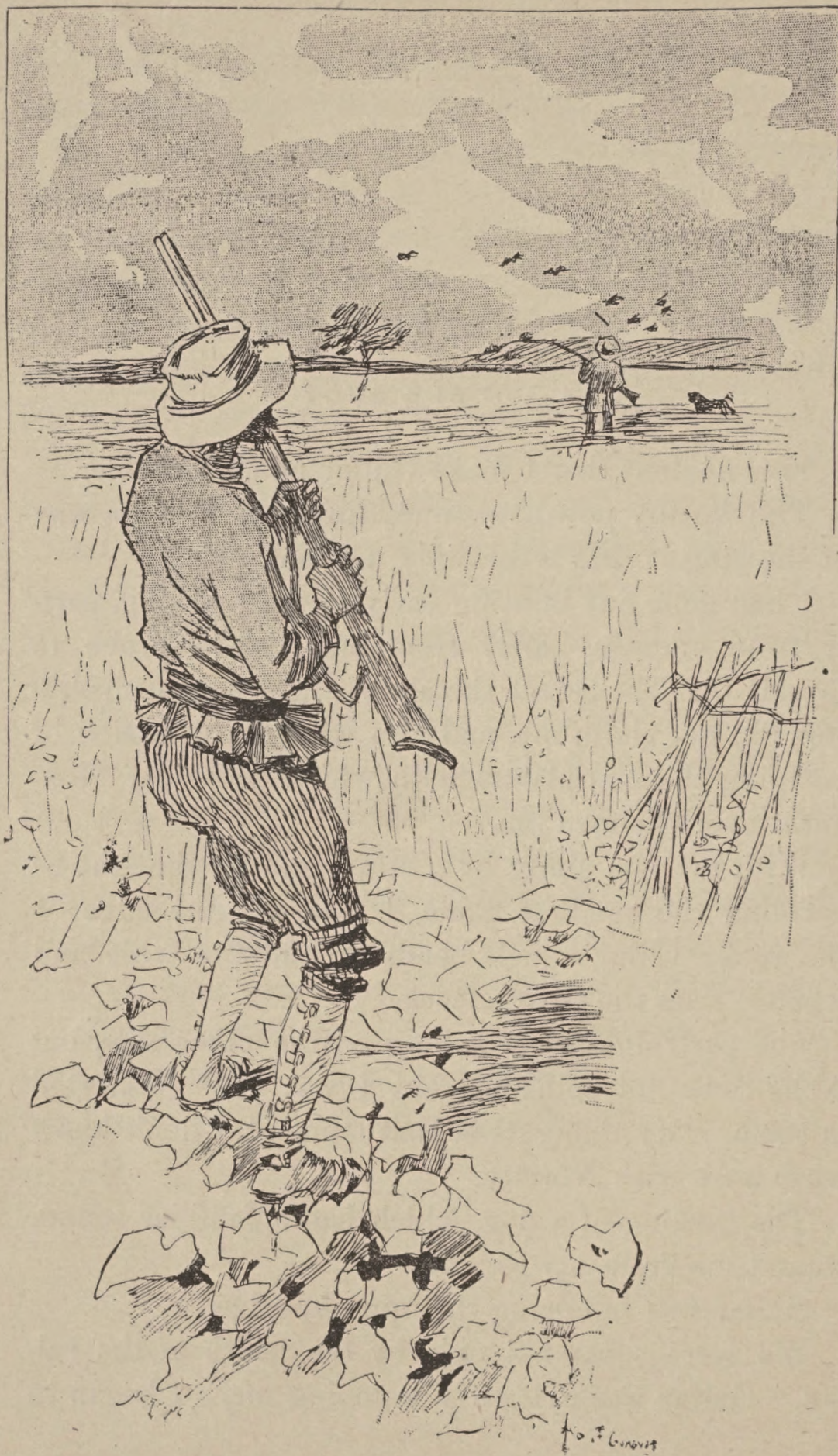
With my gun slung by a strap, and no thought of harming the smallest game, I followed the edge of the rocky valley which bends around the table-land whence rises the Goat's Rock.

The partridges were calling on the other side, but Abbé Sèbe not being present I was little interested in them. My thoughts at that moment, I don't know why, were with Norette.

The barking of a dog, which had a familiar sound, roused me from my reverie.

Galfar was following the opposite edge.

We were separated only by the width of the valley. Galfar was evidently watching me. I began to



watch him, too. He was hunting after a strange fashion.

Twice, admirably started by his dog, the partridges—a splendid covey of red partridges—rose within easy range of his gun; twice he did not fire at them.

Though but a tolerable shot, and no enthusiastic sportsman, I was furious.

But Galfar must have had a plan of his own.

At the third flight the covey turned, and, being headed off, crossed the valley, according to tactics known elsewhere.

One would have said that Galfar had been waiting for this very thing.

I saw him leap into the brambles, vanish, cross the valley, climb the other side, and appear again about fifty paces in front of me, keeping his dog close.

And off they go behind the partridges, as though to drive them towards me.

The dog sets out in search of the birds and they fly up in front of me like a curtain, out of a level stretch of dry grass. Galfar brings his gun to his shoulder. . . . For an instant I trembled, believing he was going to fire upon me, the direction was so nearly the same. He aims, fires: crack, crack! I hear something whiz past my ears. Two partridges fall at my feet.

Galfar approaches and bows to me. Galfar becomes very gentlemanly when he wears new clothes.

“A fine double shot,” I remark.

“Pooh! No great merit when a man makes his own powder.”



Then he picks up the brace of partridges.

"Would you carry them to my uncle Honnorat? No offence, since we shall soon be relatives. Perhaps it will console him for all the bad blood engendered

since I took it into my head to repair the Donkey's Passage."

Then, blowing the feathers apart, Galfar adds:

"See; not harmed a bit, only one hole! Here, to save lead, we shoot partridges with a bullet."

I congratulated Galfar and took the partridges, not wishing to be inferior to him in courtesy.

His eyes questioned me, the eyes of a southern blond, a hard, stony blue, a bit of the Mediterranean frozen.

I believe Galfar hoped to frighten me.

XXXIX

THE STONE

WITHOUT being what is called alarmed, I am beginning to fear that my adventure may end tragically; I feel it in the air around me, like the dangers and threats of which Galfar's double shot might have been the significant omen. This state of war does not displease me. A touch of romance may spring from it to relieve the somewhat monotonous round of my life in Puget.

Norette seems more excited. She is aware of the hate her cousin has sworn against me, and the sarcastic homage of the partridges gives her cause for reflection. Luckily, she does not know that it is really the Golden Goat which stirs strife between us; she ingenuously, presumptuously, attributes the hatred—and I shall certainly take care not to undeceive her—to Galfar's jealousy.

That is why—in order not to further irritate Galfar still more—Norette, trusting and prudent, has charged me to keep our plans secret; the request for her hand in marriage, which my conscience demanded, is, according to the new order, postponed.

“My father is very brave,” says Norette; “his adventures have proved that. Brave at sea; but on

shore he feels such a need of quiet, such a horror of all contention, that, while desiring our happiness, I believe he would be capable of refusing you my hand and giving it to Galfar, just for the sake of digesting his meals undisturbed and smoking his pipe in peace."

Meanwhile our love-affair pursues its course—nay, little by little, following a natural bend, from being at first innocent it has become relatively wrong. Elsewhere I should have struggled against my inclinations. But here, where Norette is alone and I am alone with Norette, in this daily tête-à-tête under this sky, among these perfumes, this silence, this solitude, with nature favoring and encouraging, suddenly I believed that I loved Norette with my whole heart.

Let city men condemn me, Robinson Crusoe would forgive.

Every evening—the extinguishing of her lamp was the signal—I went into the garden where Norette awaited me, and there, facing the bright horizon, we spent delightful hours. Far away in the distance, stretching to the sea, the hills rose one behind another in vague, tremulous outlines. The stars alone saw us.

Usually I slipped in through a little gate communicating with the corridor and the Donkey's Passage.

But now that the Donkey's Passage is occupied at night by Galfar's Piedmontese almost as much as during the day, I have been obliged to find another way.

The wall, surmounted by a railing enclosing the garden, does not rise very high, and through the almost perpendicular rock, which it crowns, extends a

fissure where grow several stunted shrubs, just suited to help in scaling the cliff.

That is the way I climb up, using elbows and knees, clinging to the rough places in the limestone rock, the bare roots, and the protuberances of the dwarf-oaks.

At the top there is a huge overhanging rock on which I am obliged to climb to reach the wall. It is no easy feat; Norette, bending forward, sometimes helps me.

No one can surprise us. Saladine goes to bed with the chickens, and Monsieur Honnorat follows her example, not only from hygienic motives, but because he prides himself on walking in the streets before dawn, to astonish, by his early rising, the peasants on their way to the fields.

Have I been watched? I think so. One evening, some one undoubtedly having loosened it during the night, I felt the stone shake and slip away under my feet. As it rolled down with a loud noise I clutched the railing, and Norette, leaning over the gulf without a cry, held out her arms to me.

The matter was discussed at breakfast this morning. Norette and I feigned ignorance of it. Saladine had heard nothing. Monsieur Honnorat had heard it, and was going to get up and light his lantern; but he decided to stay in bed, remembering that last year in the same month, after heavy rains, another large stone had rolled down in the same way.

Whatever Monsieur Honnorat may think, the rain had nothing to do with it.

In the first place, it has not been raining. And

then, Ganteaume, while inspecting, according to his praiseworthy custom, as soon as day dawned, the pavements of the streets and the dust in the roads, surprised Galfar, attended by his inseparable Piedmontese, examining, with an interest too keen not to be suspicious, the place where the stone fell.

XL

THE MASS

THIS very morning Abbé Sèbe is to celebrate his annual mass for the souls of "the two dead men."

I shall be present, having promised to go.

The bell rings and we set out. Monsieur Honnorat and Saladine walk in front; I follow, watched with curious eyes by the people standing on the thresholds of the doors, because I have had the audacity to offer my arm to Mademoiselle Norette.

Ganteaume is absent. For the last few days it has been impossible to know where to find the boy.

The church is low, white, and cold, with no pictures on the walls, no wainscoting—it is as bare as a village mosque. A passage separates two rows of benches, and on each side, exchanging fierce glances, spite of the sanctity of the place, sit the members of the two families and their followers. For, if Galfar has his partisans, Monsieur Honnorat has his also. I am every one's foe. The Golden Goat has again roused hostility; for the sake of the Golden Goat, Monsieur Honnorat's friends like me no better than Galfar's.

Galfar, with his father, Christopher Galfar, an old

peasant with the refined face of a gentleman, and his mother, formerly called madame, now plain Christole, a tall, thin woman, proud and rebellious, occupy the first bench at the right.

We, the Gazans and I, sit on the first bench at the left; and Galfar, seeing me appear safe and sound, bright as a sword-blade, is amazed, and can hardly conceal his disappointment. I smiled, remembering the stone; Norette, too, cannot help smiling.

Old Peu-Parle himself has come in full dress, wearing a three-cornered hat, knee-breeches, and white serge coat cut in the style of the Empire. Grave and formal, he attends the ceremonial out of courtesy and good-breeding.

Peu-Parle knows the Goat's secret; our emotions do not interest him.

After the mass which, newly shaved for the occasion, he has celebrated with great dignity, the abbé, standing before the altar, utters a brief address, exhorting all to cultivate a peaceful disposition and to despise the riches of this world.

His words are touching. Monsieur Honnorat, who desires nothing but peace, uses his handkerchief noisily in the finest passage. Galfar himself seems moved. But Mademoiselle Norette does not stir. Impassive, obstinate, her calm, straight profile, her fixed, resolute gaze, remind me of the imperious, dainty statuette of Saint Sarah.

Mademoiselle Norette is right.

As we leave the church we see Ganteaume com-

ing, supporting and petting Misé Jano, as she limps painfully along on three legs.

“A blow from a Piedmontese knife, hidden in the sleeve and flung from a distance,” Ganteaume tells us. “If only I had been there! But the wretch had gone and Misé Jano lay bleeding on the grass as if she were dying.”

“You see, Norette, to what your recklessness, your foolish bravado exposes us!” cried Monsieur Honnorat, purple with selfish rage, as though he felt the cold Piedmontese knife in his own flesh. “This is what comes of letting Misé Jano run about with the bell.”

“But Misé Jano didn’t wear the bell.”

“They must have supposed that she had it.”

“Well, even if he should get the bell, do you think that Galfar—a fine heir, upon my word, for the King of Majorca’s treasures—would find himself any nearer his goal?” retorted Norette, wiping Misé Jano’s frightened eyes with her handkerchief.

This is the first time Norette—and certainly she does not suspect me—has alluded to the Golden Goat.

XLI

THE ROBBERY

THESE events, especially the last one, must have had their influence upon Monsieur Honnorat's sudden resolve to visit some relatives in a village among the mountains.

Mademoiselle Norette suggests that I shall accompany them on the journey. Monsieur Honnorat insists upon it. It would be a charming trip through a picturesque region where the streams are swarming with trout. Saladine would take charge of the house.

I resist, though sorely tempted. With Galfar and his Piedmontese in the dwelling, I don't consider my presence needless to guard the tower with Saladine.

Urgent work—a plea I have invented—serves me as an excuse. Besides—this is an excellent opportunity—why shouldn't I use these three days in arranging the notes, collected hap-hazard from my reading and my walks, for the work I had in view when I settled, three months ago, at Puget-Maure?

But I fear Galfar's entrances and exits, airs of mystery and menace, will not allow me sufficient leisure.

Galfar is preparing a surprise. I know it through Ganteaume, who learned it from Peu-Parle.

What surprise? A robbery, doubtless. And it will be easy for him, since, thanks to his clever idea of paving, there he is on the spot with his three bravos.

Luckily, I am on the watch, Ganteaume keeps the best lookout he is able, and we can rely on the more than masculine courage and long arms of Saladine.

During two days, which is natural enough, and two nights, which somewhat humiliates me, nothing happens. But on the third, about eleven o'clock, the village being asleep, I suddenly hear the donkey bray in the stable at the end of the passage.

Then a door creaks, heavy footsteps ascend the staircase, and from my window, looking out upon the garden, I see Galfar, who, with a gesture of the hand as if to stop some people who are following him, puts his ear against the blinds of the ground-floor room where Saladine sleeps.

"Go on," he mutters; "don't make a sound. I'll keep watch here, in case she should wake."

The Piedmontese are evidently ordered to rifle Norrette's chambers of its treasures; they will force the door. Galfar contents himself with issuing commands, being far too well-born to condescend to such business.

What if I should send a bullet at Galfar as an answer to his double shot?

Suddenly some one below shouts:

"Oh! Saladine... oh! Gazan..."

"Oh! ba-a-ak-er!" responds Saladine, in a drowsy voice.

It is the baker on his rounds through the village, calling the hour when the leaven would be ready for the people who are to bake on the morrow, and stopping under the windows instead of knocking at the doors, less from indolence than from the decorative necessity of filling the deep silence of the night with the noise of his voice.

Galfar has disappeared. Light shines from a window; Saladine is getting up.

Then the window is dark again, and on the bricks of the staircase, the stones of the Donkey's Passage, I hear for an instant Saladine's shuffling steps as she moves away, while, departing to other patrons, the baker's call, "Oh! Myon... oh! Nore... oh! Madon..." grows more and more indistinct.

I supposed myself rid of my robbers, but after vanishing an instant they reappeared as soon as Saladine had fairly gone.

What can I do, one against four? Wake Ganteaume, who is asleep over my head in the garret? Ganteaume has a brave spirit. But he must be dreaming of Norette; it is better to leave him to his dreams.

Meanwhile I hear a noise like a screw squeaking, wood grinding. The robbers are getting in. I have an idea!

The door of the Donkey's Passage, which leads into the little square, is open, and, according to the patriarchal customs of the country, a key—a huge key, big enough to fell an ox—is left in the lock.

I will go out, fasten the door on the outside, and

passing through the lower part of the village mount guard below the garden before the only outlet Galfar and his ruffians would take, and which Galfar, at least, had known since the episode of the stone—that is, the foot of the slope up which I climbed to meet Norette.

Their surprise accomplished, finding the door locked, they will try to escape by this way.

XLII

“GUEITO”

KEY in hand—why had I kept it?—I hurriedly cross the dark square, where there is no lantern; I thread the vaulted arcades, the streets, a sort of staircase cut in the living rock; I pass through the machicolated postern where huge tufts of maidenhair sway at the will of a perpetual draught, and conceal myself in the shadow exactly in front of the stone my imprudent climb pushed down the other day.

Raising my head, I see above me the village, the house of the Gazans, with its square tower, its old walls clothed with ivy, and for a pedestal supporting the whole a pyramid of small gardens, rising one above another like steps.

One alone interests me — that at the very top; where, relieved against the bright sky, restless shadows are moving to and fro.

I have done well in hastening.

I am barely there before three of the shadows bestride the wall and cautiously let themselves slip down the rock; a fourth follows, carrying something that looks like a gun slung by a shoulder-belt,

“Ecco, signor.”

On meeting, the Piedmontese, for it was they, give Galfar something and scamper off away from the village, without a glance behind, catching their heels in the pebbles and getting entangled in the broom and myrtles.

They disappear. Galfar, relieved, and henceforward certain that the Italians will be suspected, sits down by the roadside, draws from the huge pocket forming a bag in the back of his jacket the mysterious object the fugitives handed him, and gazes complacently at it, for the faint light of dawn has blended for a few moments with the paling lustre of the stars.

I recognize Misé Jano's bell, the bell of the Golden Goat.

A leap, Galfar yells, the bell rolls on the ground, and with it the massive iron key with which I have dealt the blow, and which I drop to arm myself with my pistol.

Galfar turns. My pistol stops him, and he draws back conquered, muttering menacing words and supporting his bruised and bleeding wrist with his left hand.

Thinking him far away, I stoop to pick up the precious bell I have at last won, when a shout startles me.

"Gueito!" cries Galfar, a word which in the language of Puget-Maure means "beware!"

Forty yards off, I see, in the broadening light of day, my furious foe holding with his one sound hand his gun to his cheek and taking aim.

I have a pistol. Let us take aim, at all events.

"Gueito!" cries Galfar again. Without waiting for me he fires. I fall. Perhaps he has fired too soon. But, at any rate, it was after having warned me ; and, after all, honor is safe.

XLIII

THE GOOD GENDARME

WHERE am I? My astonished eyes do not recognize the cold, bare room in the tower which they usually behold at the hour I generally awake.

Yataghans, red clay pipes incrusting with filigree, round tables and mirrors adorned with coral and mother-of-pearl, rugs, hangings—why, it is Monsieur Honnorat's room, the one which, with a touch of exaggeration, he calls his chamber of wonders, while Mademoiselle Norette says, simply, the treasure-room.

It seems that I owe my life to Peu-Parle, who is always astir at daybreak, and whose sudden appearance, when the gun was fired, put my unknown murderer to flight.

I had fainted. Some peasants, summoned by Peu-Parle, laid me on a donkey and carried me to the Gazans, where, finding the tower staircase too narrow to carry up a wounded man, Saladine took it upon herself—kind Saladine—to transform Monsieur Honnorat's chamber into an infirmary for me. Never mind if Monsieur Honnorat is vexed. He will only have to change his habits and smoke his pipes elsewhere.

For Monsieur Honnorat and Norette have not yet returned. There is nobody with me except Peu-Parle and Saladine. Ganteaume, having assisted in a first hasty bandaging, has gone, I don't know where, in search of a doctor.

Yet some one is bending over my bed, talking to me as though I were a child, murmuring gentle words. Was it Norette or only Monsieur Honnorat?—the delicate, Oriental profile of the daughter, or the fat face, so cheerful in its egotism, of her worthy father?

Confound it, it is a gendarme! A good old gendarme, with a wax-colored mustache, a shoulder-belt, and a three-cornered hat—regular official costume.

"This is the fourth time he has come to inquire about you since you met with an accident this morning," says Saladine. So much interest touches me; weak, and a little light-headed, I feel ready to open my heart to the representative of authority.

Meanwhile, without urgency, without even seeming to do so, the worthy gendarme is questioning me. True, he puts on gloves for the purpose, but they are official ones, and, spite of my condition, I have no difficulty in baffling his blunt and artless diplomacy.

This gendarme, who is comparatively well educated, wishing to do himself the credit of an official report, "noted on the spot," would like to know when and how and by whom I was wounded.

"Why, dear me," I replied, "I thought you were sufficiently shrewd to have guessed the whole affair at once. I was wounded this morning by one—I don't know which—of the three Piedmontese employed to

pave the Donkey's Passage whom I surprised in the act of robbing the house. Did they actually rob it?"

"Alas!" replied Saladine.

"They haven't been seen since."

"And never will be!"

"Then their absence denounces them. Besides, as well as the darkness allowed me to see, they wore heavy unpolished boots and spoke Italian."

The gendarme listened to my words with a vexed, suspicious expression.

"We have proved the robbery, and your depositions agree. Still, the shot surprises me. The Piedmontese do not generally use guns."

"Yet I have received a bullet."

"Undoubtedly. But coming thus from a simple Piedmontese a bullet is not to be expected," replied the gendarme, who evidently had his suspicions and his idea. "Do not you happen to know of any rival, any enemy?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let the poor gentleman alone!" interrupted Saladine. "He is almost ready to faint, and I did very wrong to allow you to come in before the doctor."

The gendarme bowed and smiled. The smile meant:

"These are Puget-Maure affairs. You don't want the Government to meddle with them."

Then he marched out with soldierly bearing, and Saladine, jealous above all else of the Gazan honor, happy at having escaped scandal, cast at me the only

pleasant glance I have ever known her to give, while Pen-Parle, clinching his teeth, muttered:

“You are right; gendarmes have nothing to do with honest people’s quarrels. Yet this morning, strictly between ourselves, I thought I recognized the crack of Galfar’s gun.”

XLIV

DREAMS

How many things have happened within these few days! How many events and surprises! How much happiness has come to me! My heart is glad and my brain seems bewildered.

All my previsions are realized.

The success of my adventure exceeds my hopes.

Poor Galfar imagined that, by seizing the bell, he would be master of the Golden Goat.

Galfar must understand by this time that the Golden Goat does not yield to idle threats. Proud, it hates deeds of violence; one must know how to please, to charm it; the rest is useless.

Misé Jano's bell has certainly been of service to me. I have deciphered, though not without difficulty, the words engraved on it, and in this way obtained the necessary clew.

But what should I have done without Norette? It is she who has sustained and encouraged me. Thanks to her, for her sake, I have courage to persevere in the enterprise—spite of Galfar, the people of Puget, their open wrath and secret ambushes. With her, at the time of the solstice, at the hour designated, the

shadow of the rock marking the spot, we beheld, having removed a little earth and turf, the mysterious iron coffer, the depository of the secret.

We went at night into a wild valley. Lofty rocks were outlined against a star-strewn sky, and Misé Jano, with her bell on her neck, followed us. Together, by a mutual effort, Norette helping me with her little brown hands, we made the moving stone turn. Oh, the dazzling radiance at the very end of the grotto, whose narrow passages we slowly followed hand in hand!

There, in countless numbers, flashing in the light of our torch, lay the King of Majorca's treasures. I have seen them; my eyes are dazzled by that one view for a single instant. I shall not see them again for a month, on the day of our marriage. This is Norette's wish, and I must obey her.

XLV

MORE DREAMS

OH, I have obeyed, I have waited! Very rich and very happy, thanks to the fantastic Goat and its exhaustless heaps of gold, Norette and I have done marvellous things.

In the first place Puget-Maure, whitewashed from base to summit, glitters in the sun like a diamond on its cliff. Loaded with Norette's gifts, the inhabitants have become so many little lords, and no longer poach, except for their own amusement. Monsieur Honnorat, still mayor—though he now smokes his pipe in Turkish costume—devised the clever plan of placing at the entrance of the village a placard bearing the following inscription:

MUNICIPAL ORDER

Poverty is forbidden on the Territory of this Parish

Peu-Parle, aided by the good gendarme, will have charge of ferreting out the delinquents, who will be pitilessly arrested and allowed to remain only on condition of accepting new clothes and a well-filled purse. Those who are wicked and refuse will be promptly conducted to the frontier.

For the time a certain egotism absorbs me, and I devote my thoughts mainly to Norette—that is, to myself.

I have rebuilt for her, in elegant Moorish style, the ruined palace where we gathered the Queen's flowers amid the rocks and precipices. Norette is queen, queen of the gypsies; she wears robes embroidered with pearls and rubies, decks herself with rare gems. Saladine serves her; only Saladine is a negress, and her name is Sarah, which, however, does not seem to surprise any one.

I am forgetting to say that Misé Jano—between ourselves, she was really the Golden Goat, and the other morning, having caught her by the horns, I was amazed by the weight and the cold, metallic feeling of her fleece—yes, I am forgetting to say that Misé Jano lives at the end of a garden gay with jets of water falling into marble basins and planted with Oriental trees, a delicious open-air pavilion; and every Sunday Abbé Sèbe celebrates the mass in a chapel surmounted by a *calotte* of painted bricks, whose bells chime from a minaret.

In addition to this, I intend to use the fortune for which destiny has made me accountable in the service of France and of humanity. I have great plans in view; but before carrying them into execution I am waiting for the arrival of Ganteaume, who has his own ideas about them.

Ganteaume alone is absent from Puget. He has set off on Arlatan to go to Little Camargues to find Skipper Ruf and Tardive. But all three will soon re-

turn. A signal will announce the mooring of their galley in the *calanque* of Aygues-Sèches. We will load her with precious stones. I will embark with Norette and make the tour of the world . . .

In the midst of my dreams—I understand now that they are dreams caused by the fever—keen pain sometimes blended with them, like the sharp pang from some imperfectly healed wound. Then I encountered Galfar, a spiteful sarcastic Galfar, whose smile froze my blood.

Then the pain ceased, to give way again to fairy visions, visions of power, of a free, noble life spent, with Love for a companion, in sailing over blue seas, past fertile shores, where groups of white cities, palaces of brilliant hues, are hidden among the palm-trees.

XLVI

CONVALESCENCE

ONE morning the dreams vanish, and I find myself again lying in the chamber of wonders.

Memory returns, and I recall the Piedmontese, the bell, Galfar's shot. The ball has been extracted; but for nearly two weeks I lay delirious, hovering between life and death. Galfar did his work thoroughly.

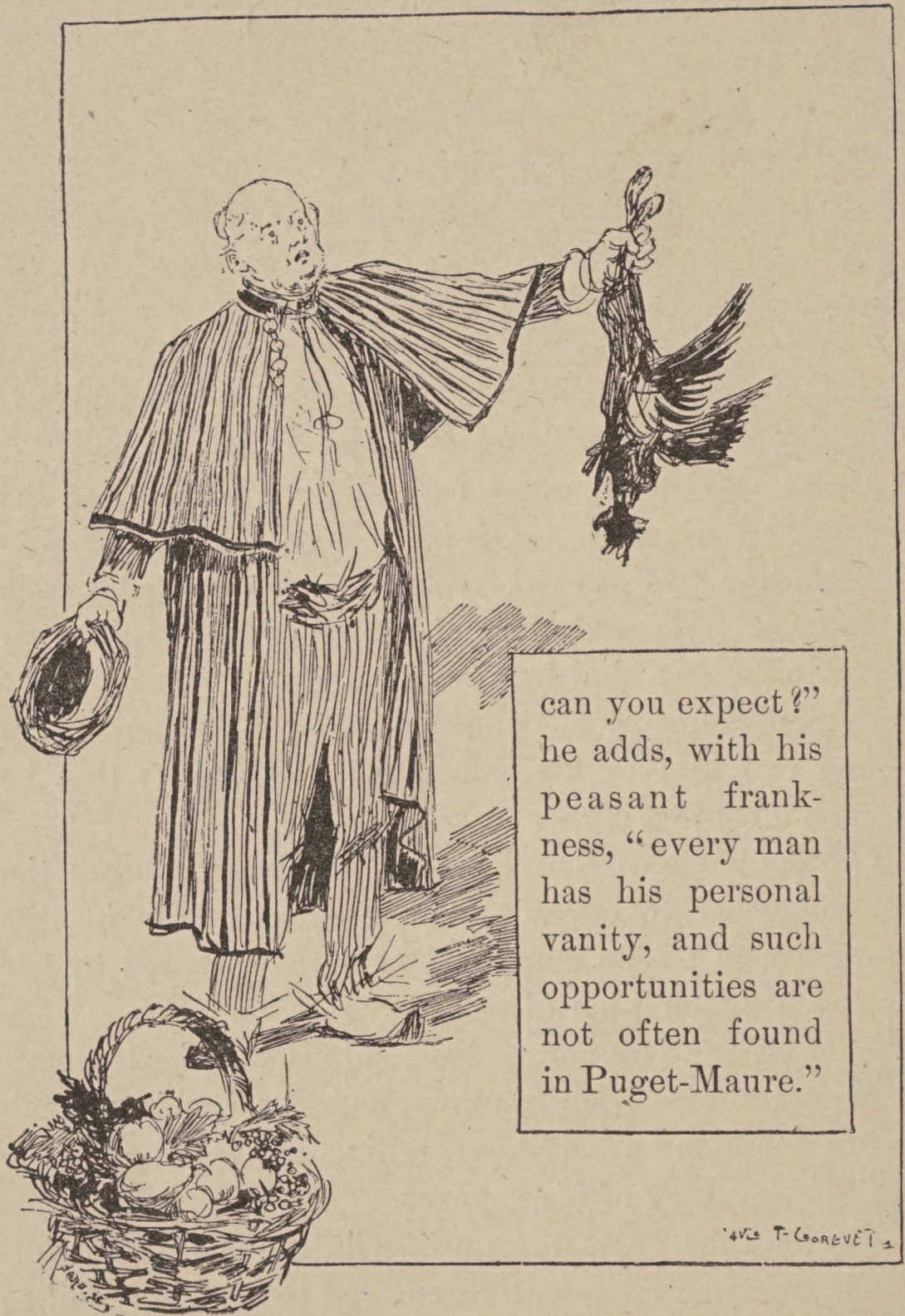
How many kind hearts surround me!

Ganteaume is so delighted when I recognize him and call him by his name ("Ganteaume!") that he runs off into a corner to cry.

Saladine, now that I am out of danger, abuses the doctor, and, to effect a complete cure, daily invents some new potion composed of herbs gathered by her own hands and harmless, at any rate.

Monsieur Honnorat—tremendous sacrifice!—sometimes abstains from smoking, and sits beside my pillow for many a half hour, telling me for the fiftieth time the story of his voyages.

The abbé bears me no ill-will, though disappointed. He had confidently expected to send my soul to heaven with a first-class viaticum, the soul of a scholar who would do him honor in the world above. "What



can you expect?"
he adds, with his
peasant frank-
ness, "every man
has his personal
vanity, and such
opportunities are
not often found
in Puget-Maure."

J. GOREVET

Every one feels kindly towards me. The worst enemies the Golden Goat made for me are anxious, and at bakery, barber's shop, and fountain ask how I am faring. Our revengeful Saladine enjoys snubbing them.

This sudden change is doubtless due to my chivalric attitude concerning Galfar when examined by the good gendarme.

What am I saying? Galfar himself seems glad to know that I am not dead and have thus spared him a disagreeable complication with the Court of Assizes. Galfar, supposing that my appetite has already returned, deigned to send me, no later than yesterday, by Peu-Parle, all the game he had killed the evening before.

And Norette? And the Golden Goat?

With regard to the Golden Goat, in which I believe more fully than ever, one thing is sufficient for me to know—that the bell is saved. I was clinching it in my hand, Peu-Parle tells me, when he raised me bleeding from the stones.

Mademoiselle Norette's manner makes me a little uneasy. I can remember, in certain lucid intervals of my delirium, an anxious, eager Norette bending over me with a pale face and troubled eyes.

Yet now Norette is no longer the same. She seems to have closed her heart, and appears to remember nothing. Sometimes I ask myself whether I did not dream of the evenings spent in lovers' talk in the garden under the favoring light of the stars, as I dreamed of our visit to the grotto of the Golden Goat.



This state of affairs tortures me horribly, and prevents my appreciating the full sweetness of the joys of convalescence. To feel life reviving after we believe ourselves dying makes the soul experience the emotions one has on returning home. But what can this mean? A sky so blue, a sun so bright, flowers, perfumes, the carolling of birds, and—no smile from Norette...

I have a childish desire for this smile, more than a desire—an absolute necessity. I expected it when I opened my eyes; it was part of my cure.

Norette, alas, will no longer smile upon me! Her glance has told me so, a glance of scorn and pity, here, in the garden, for I sometimes walk a few steps, with her support, near the laurel-trees whose dense shades used to conceal us, beside the bench where we have so often sat.

I tried to kiss her hand, to speak of the past, but that clear glance stopped me.

What have I done to deserve Norette's hate?

Nothing! Only Norette is a woman, and, I know not why, either from sheer caprice or a desire to torture, she employs against me that terrible faculty of forgetfulness which women possess, airs of ignorance, artless denials, that would make the most triumphant Don Juan doubt on the morrow a love he had won the night before.



XLVII

OFF FOR THE CREEK

ONE morning Monsieur Honnorat comes in, jovial and noisy, equipped in full fishing costume.

"Come, get up; everything is settled. The doctor sanctions the expedition. The new moon appeared last night, and the sea-chestnuts must be plump."

Every convalescent is alive to good eating. The word sea-chestnuts suddenly roused an indescribable gastronomic nostalgia which had slept in the depths of my being.

For at least six months Monsieur Honnorat had promised me this fishing excursion, and we had often risen before daybreak to go down to the *calanque*, hoping to have fine weather.

But each time a malicious little breeze, ruffling the surface of the water, compelled us to defer the expedition. The sort of fishing we desire requires a perfectly dead calm.

This morning everything promised to be just what we wanted: not a breath of air, and down below not a wrinkle on the sea.

“So our object is to catch sea-urchins?”

“Exactly! We shall start in fifteen minutes; most of the party on foot; you, to avoid fatigue, on Saladin. Galfar will lead him. We ought to be already at Aygues-Sèches, where we are to have a surprise. We shall fish till it grows warm, and then make the *bouillabaisse* under the pines.”

I accept eagerly. Norette persists in evading me when I want to speak to her; on the way I shall doubtless find an opportunity to have an explanation.

During the whole long descent Norette, walking beside the donkey, does not deign to address a word to me. She was talking unconcernedly with her father about a lawsuit which summons them to Arles and will probably require a long stay there. Perhaps, in consequence of these new interests, they will be compelled to leave Puget-Maure forever. Then what will become of me?

But Norette does not even see me; Norette does not care for my troubles.

Yet she is kind-hearted; she feels anxious about Misé Jano's fate.

“Pshaw!” says Monsieur Honnorat, “we'll give her to Peu-Parle; the crazy fellow is fond of animals. Misé Jano can't help being happy with him.”

Mademoiselle Norette assents, smoothing Saladin's rough hair with her hand—the supple brown hand I have often pressed.



How little this trip resembles our rambles among the mountains in the dawn of our love, when I was jealous of Ganteaume, and Misé Jano followed us.

The surprise is Skipper Ruf and Tardive, who, informed of our plan by worthy Monsieur Honnorat, are waiting for us in the big boat.

“Why, is it you, Skipper Ruf—and Tardive?”

There are mutual embraces. Ganteaume is delighted, and Monsieur Honnorat, who knew the whole plan, feigns to be the most astonished of all.

I alone cannot be merry, and continue to wear a dull face. Luckily, by way of excuse, I have the pretext of invalidism.

XLVIII

CATCHING SEA-URCHINS

MEANWHILE Skipper Ruf was growing impatient.

“Well, will you come along, you good-for-nothing cabin-boy? We’ve been waiting two hours.”

At first I supposed he was speaking to Ganteaume. But Skipper Ruf instantly added:

“May heaven’s thunder blast me if one can do anything with this brute!”

I was amazed that worthy Skipper Ruf, usually so calm and so well-mannered, should speak in such a way, and especially to his son. But I perceived that he was laughing in his sleeve though he raised his voice, and understood that his wrath was feigned.

A man with a gray beard came out of the clump of tamarisks, holding in each hand a varnished *dourgue*,* which he had just filled at the spring. Though clad like a common sailor, he wore the red rosette in his button-hole.

“Is it you, colonel?” cried Monsieur Honnorat. “What favoring breeze, what lucky chance . . .”

But Skipper Ruf gave him no time to answer.

* Leather pail.

Come, boy, pass me the *dourgue*, and be quicker than that about it; my tongue is parched."

The boy, over fifty years old, an officer of the Legion of Honor, passed the *dourgue*. Skipper Ruf seemed greatly amused. He pretended to calm himself after drinking a cup of cold water, and the cabin-boy with the rank of colonel found an opportunity to say a few words of explanation.

There were at Antibes a dozen retired officers who were undergoing the same fate as himself.

Seized with the craze for the sea, and spending three-quarters of their lives on the water, these land-owners, to escape the tyranny of a regulation which is not lenient to amateur mariners, and avoid, once for all, the annoyances and fines of the terrible commissioner of the port, had resolved to obtain the commission of skippers of fishing-craft.

But before being a skipper it is necessary, according to the Colbert law still in force on our coasts, to serve an apprenticeship as cabin-boy.

So these worthy folk served a *bona fide* apprenticeship as cabin-boys with skipper friends who meant kindly by them. The skippers, of course, treated them as cabin-boys.

"For my part," said the colonel, philosophically, "I haven't much cause to complain. Skipper Ruf yells, but he's a good fellow. I know some who are worse off..."

At that moment Skipper Ruf began to storm again:

"The phial of oil, the baskets, the oars."

"Here they are, at your service. The skipper is getting angry; let us go on board."

I was somewhat surprised to see no nets in the boat.

"With what, then, are the sea-urchins caught?"

"Patience. We shall find more implements than we need in the cane plantations of Vau-Méjane."

In fact, as we coasted along Vau-Méjane, the colonel, attentive to his duties as cabin-boy, though a trifle mortified by Norette's presence, went ashore and cut several long stalks in a thicket of ragged, quivering reeds.

Then, having re-embarked, he stripped the canes of their leaves, cut four slits in one end and put into it, to hold the four sections apart, a round stone picked up on the shore expressly for the purpose. He shaped them, tied them with strings, waxed them, and in this way made utensils somewhat similar to the fruit-pickers used by gardeners.

The most successful one was for Norette.

During this important operation Skipper Ruf, aided by Ganteaume, using the sail and the oars by turns, had conveyed us to the desired goal.

On a bed of rocks and algæ we saw, through the luminous green water, sea-urchins moving about, travelling along a little sideways on their mobile prickles, so that they looked like huge living chestnuts bristling in their shells.

We had only to gather them, which at first sight seemed simple.

You plunge the reed into the water, aim at the

creature, press it down, draw it up. Ah, no; it's not quite so easy as that! Monsieur Honnorat, Ganteaume, and Norette are skilful in this sport, and rarely miss their mark. The colonel and I fail every time. It's the very deuce to direct, nearly two fathoms under water, a cane-stalk which, by the refraction of the light, looks as though it were broken into halves.

Lying face downward, I fairly blind myself scanning these clear, glittering, sun-steeped depths, which seem like waves of molten emeralds.

Victory! Scraping to and fro, my cane at last comes up with a sea-urchin at the end. Alas! a *blue* sea-urchin! Instead of being mahogany color, mine has a tiny bead of the palest turquoise shade at the end of each prickle.

Very pretty to look at is the blue sea-urchin, but perfectly detestable to eat.

All laugh at me for this wonderful exploit, Norette even more than the others. But Skipper Ruf takes pity on me, relieves me of my duties as fisherman, and places the phial of oil in my care.

The wind has risen, the sea begins to dimple, and the depths are disturbed. Following the immemorial usage the Provençals obtain from the Greeks, I sprinkle with a feather a few drops of oil on the waves around the boat. It spreads, the ripples vanish, and the sea, in the midst of rising waves, once more becomes, for the space of several feet, as smooth as slightly iridescent glass.

Sea-urchins, and more sea-urchins! Dozens suc-

ceed dozens. At last Skipper Ruf lays down his spear, lights his pipe, and says we have caught enough and it is time for breakfast.

Nine o'clock, and the sun is already high in the heavens. We land and encamp in the shade of a gray rock strewn with pine-needles.

Yonder in the distance, beyond the gulf, stretches the superb curve of the coast-line between the azure sea and the purple Alps, whose jagged peaks are covered with snow. The sea sighs lazily, and the pines answer the sea.

Then, forgetting the sea-urchins in gazing at Mademoiselle Norette, who is still impassive and haughty, I begin to envy the colonel. He has no thought of love-affairs; a word of encouragement from Skipper Ruf is sweeter to his heart than all Norette's smiles; and I would gladly be, like him, a cabin-boy—yes, a good old gray-bearded cabin-boy, with friend Ruf for skipper.

XLIX

THE SACRIFICE

A HUNDRED sea-urchins eaten on the beach hardly count, except as an appetizer. We are now to fish along the windings of the coast for the *pey San-Péiré*, the *rascasse*, and other savory rockfish that are indispensable ingredients of the *bouillabaisse* planned for our noon-day dinner. Here people dine at noon, every nation having its own customs.

Skipper Ruf gives me a line and a handful of *mourédus*,* and I essay the feat of keeping my balance in the broad sunlight on the steep promontories and sharp white rocks of the shore.

But I had trusted my strength too far. The dancing of the sunbeams on the water, my fixed attention, have dimmed my eyes and troubled my head. The mingled odors of the pine-trees and the sea-weed, the sea-air I inhale with delight, fairly intoxicate me. I feel a need of sleep, an irresistible desire to lie motionless at ease; and having given my line to the colonel, I stagger like a drunken man as I go to stretch myself on the bottom of the boat which lies moored in a hollow of the cliff.

* Limpets.

The boat rocks, creaking on the lapping tide. Above my head, shutting out the sun, arches a damp vault incrustated with salt, where pebbles shine, *patelles** live, and, at the changeless low-water mark, grow mosses of bitter odors and marine plants.

I have closed my eyes and lost myself in a dream.

Is it not here, in this gulf, at the deepest part of the blue abyss, that ages ago the fabled city, the ancient Atlantis, vanished with its portals and marble towers, whose splendor Skipper Ruf one day described?

But the sea gently recedes from beneath the boat, and the boat, descending with it, leaves me on golden sands strewn with pearls.

And lo, Norette, her hair crowned with coral, in the costume of the fairy Ocean, takes me by the hand, leads me into a vast city, and shows me her palace, her treasures.

Always dreams, always treasures, always Norette.

A jar interrupts my light slumber.

The boat has struck against the rock; some one has leaped into her.

I start up and see Norette, who, after avoiding me for a week, now seeks me.

Ganteaume accompanies her and unties the rope.

"Come Ganteaume, you shall row."

Then, addressing me:

"We can talk better at sea; I have some very important things to say to you."

Listening to her agitated voice, and meeting the

* *Whelks.*

earnest gaze of her beautiful eyes, whose glance expresses sorrow rather than anger, I feel my face flush, though I could not have explained why.

"It is about the Golden Goat," she adds.

At the words, by a sudden vision, I at last divined the motives—but too well justified—of her manner. I tried to speak, but could find no words.

"Deny nothing, explain nothing! Some things cannot be retrieved. Would to heaven Galfar's bullet had killed you! Perhaps I might have died, too; and even if the black earth had not desired me, at least I should have remained your widow, with an eternal grief in my heart for a love in which I believed. But in your fever you dreamed aloud, too loudly for my happiness, since, alas! I understood the meaning of your words. Gold, diamonds, the Goat, the bell . . . And through one whole long night, which seemed endless beside your pillow, from the lips I watched, rejoicing over the breath of returning life, I gathered, syllable by syllable, the painful, humiliating certainty that, knowing I loved you, you had no love for me."

Beautiful, indeed, and worthy of any heart, was this proud child, awaked to womanhood by her keen anger.

I tried to kiss her hands, bathing them with unfeigned tears.

Shaking her head gently she repelled me, sadly, yet firmly.

"What avails this, since I know all is over—since, even if you spoke the truth, I should refuse to believe you."

The absolute finality of the decree roused me, and the feeling of rebellion inspired a certain degree of courage.

“Listen, Norette, I will be frank! What I am about to say should be confessed to you on my knees, if my wound would permit and the boat was not piled with the shells of so many sea-urchins. Yes, a series of singular events, among which, in the first place, was the finding the bell, made me guess, with no premeditation on my part, both your Oriental origin and the secret you possess concerning the King of Majorca’s treasure. At the time I met you I had little belief in the treasure. Gradually, without reflecting, I became accustomed to confound both you and the treasure in the same vague hopes of conquest. Why did I not speak of it to you? My silence was my sole crime, an involuntary one which I am expiating, since it costs me your love. But, if it is true that the words you have uttered to-day predict an eternal separation, I swear here, before God, in the presence of Ganteaume, that no interested motives guided my steps when I followed the stony bed of the torrent which led me to Puget-Maure; I swear that the first time I saw you, ready to love you already, Norette, I was perfectly ignorant of the existence—nay, the very name—of the Golden Goat!”

My pleading contained a little truth and a great deal of falsehood, but the facts were so far distant, and my feelings had changed so greatly since then, that falsehood and truth might conscientiously be confounded.

Norette was thinking: "Does he believe he is telling the truth?"

I: "If she would but pretend to believe me."

Two lovers are very near an understanding when their wishes are mute accomplices.

But Norette did not yield.

Ganteaume, greatly troubled by this conversation, with a few hasty strokes of the oars doubled a small cape, whose rocky mass—white near the sea, crowned with myrtles on the summit—concealed us from curious eyes.

"You are not mistaken, the treasure does exist," Norette went on. "The secret has been in our family ever since the defeat and embarkation of the Moors. Long preserved by tradition, it was not until the fourteenth century that one of our ancestors, Maître Michel Gazan, astrologer and physician to Queen Jeanne, made and engraved—fearing the knowledge might finally be lost—the famous talisman representing a bell of Saracenic pattern. . . . Take it, take it, here it is, red with your blood as when you snatched it from Galfar! Take it! Why hesitate? Will you not then have all you sought from Norette?"

I took the bell. Norette turned pale, but a flash of pleasure illumined Ganteaume's mournful eyes. To accept the treasure meant to renounce Norette, and, should I do that, Ganteaume might hope.

I sat erect; the glittering silver bell trembled between my thumb and forefinger, and the sunbeams, the reflection from the water, flashed on the turquoises

and diamonds set in the intaglios of the inscription in arabesque encircling the edge.

At that moment I might have read it, but a tear springing, I know not whence, dimmed my eyes and prevented me.

"So this is to part us forever?" I asked Norette.

"Forever!" she replied.



"Nothing on earth is of so much value as love. Why sadden our lives with what keeps our hearts asunder? The sea under the boat is deep; I have only to open my fingers and the secret of the Golden Goat will be buried forever."

"You are the master!" sighed Norette.

I held the little bell suspended an instant longer, then bending forward, unclasped my fingers. Slowly, gently, as if reluctant, it sank, swaying to and fro, and, like a paling white star, at last disappeared in the depths of the transparent water. The King of Majorca's treasures joined Skipper Ruf's.

From the top of the cape among the myrtles Monsieur Honnorat called:

"Come, children, the breeze is failing, and Tardive has served the *bouillabaisse*."

Ganteaume, utterly miserable, having lost both love and wealth, was mingling his tears with the shower of drops falling from the oars.

But Norette was in my arms, and, absorbed in the divine egotism of love, we did not even see his tears.

L

A DAY OF JOY AND AN EVENING OF SORROW

SADLY, and with a soul steeped in melancholy, do I resume—having promised myself I would—the memoirs interrupted for six months by happiness, as the signal-telegraph sometimes used to be by the fog.

Happiness? Yes; from the day I married Norette I have enjoyed a calm, sincere happiness, which nothing would have lessened had it not been for the grief that suddenly darkened with its shadow the soft, steady light of our honeymoon.

The wedding over—how much powder was burned during *la Bravade*, and how many newly flayed skins garlanded the Gazan door-way on this occasion!—a steadfast calm, after so many exciting events, again reigned at Puget-Maure.

Ganteaume, bereft of his illusions, went back to the Little Camargue. A remnant of his former love still occupies his heart, but the sea will console him. He comes up to see us once a week, sometimes with Tardive, sometimes with Skipper Ruf, and brings us fish or shell-fish. We intend to spend a whole spring in their enlarged cottage, and Norette grows enthusiastic

over the idea of sleeping under the pretty dark-green velvet ceiling, formed by the wrong side of a roof made of long feathery reeds.

The house remains unchanged, still white and old, with its cool court-yard covered by a vine-clad arbor, its small hanging-garden fragrant with sage and rosemary. We have not even touched the pavement of the Donkey's Passage, though Galfar, fairly vanquished by my generosity, has yielded his right to the stable at the end, and thus terminated old dissensions before taking a voyage to India, whose expenses Monsieur Honnorat desired to pay.

Saladin belongs to us; he occupies the stable, with Misé Jano. Saladine has insensibly fallen into the habit of giving him her dead husband's name.

I am trying to continue my work, and worthy Abbé Sèbe, as before, borrows my gun whenever opportunity offers.

Yet our archæological researches, our pauses before time-worn stones, have ceased to anger the peasants. No one gives any further thought to the King of Majorca's treasures—no one, that is, except Peu-Parle—who, disturbed for a while by these incidents, has now returned to his usual place under the Goat's Rock, and so long as the sun shines continues his interrupted dream.

What shall I say of Norette? She does not belie the prophecies contained in the basket presented by the three old women. Always good as bread, pure as salt, industrious as a distaff, I hope, at no distant day, to see her do honor to the fourth wish.

She has whispered something in my ear. Skipper Ruf shall be godfather.

Since Monsieur Honnorat has had the hope of being a grandfather, he cannot keep quiet. The Turk in his temperament has vanished. No more afternoon siestas, no more of those endless idle hours spent sitting and thinking of nothing while he smoked his pipes. He feels a constant desire to keep in motion, a thoroughly juvenile activity.

“Let us be stirring,” he repeats. Monsieur Honnorat desires riches for his grandson, and with this praiseworthy intent has set to work to restore the vineyards of Puget-Maure. According to him, wine formerly flowed through the village streets as the water now pours down after a rain. That is why all the houses have such large cellars, with vats bricked like towers, and casks of cut stone to provide for exceptional years, when the wooden ones did not suffice. But at last, by dint of requiring too much from them, the vines have become exhausted.

To think that, from the days of Noah, we have always depended upon slips, and nobody ever thought of renewing by young vines raised from seeds plants I know not how many centuries old! How could it be supposed that, with such hygiene, the divine twisted wood could retain its strength, and henceforth, softer than tinder, resist the voracious teeth of the viewless foes that assail it on all sides? The fungus *oidium*, the *Milo-Diou*, the phylloxera, and all the rest have a right to such easy prey. “Let us give the vine a firm pith, a hard bark, and none of these creatures will bite

into it any more." The theory is certainly luminous in its simplicity.

Monsieur Honnorat, from motives of patriotism, objects to using American plants. Besides, they produce poor wine. He means to propagate from the seeds of French grapes chosen from the best vineyards. The angle of the garden, which is as warm as a hot-house, is already laid out in beds. It will require, perhaps, five or ten years before the seeds thus raised can be properly rooted. What does that matter? The mother of days is not dead.

Meanwhile, to soothe his impatience, Monsieur Honnorat is directing a squad of peasants, whose mission is to take up carefully, without injuring the beard of the roots, in the valleys, under the thickets, every plant of *vitis labrusca** twining amid the boughs of pine or oak its flexible shoots loaded with grapes whose seeds are small and few.

"The wild vine is the true vine, and worth all the Jaquez in the world."

Afterwards, at great expense, the plants thus obtained are transplanted to a stony tract of land, untilled from time immemorial, of which Monsieur Honnorat has discovered himself to be the owner.

Excellent Monsieur Honnorat!

I have not been able to resist the temptation of teasing him a little about his methods.

"Pshaw!" he replied; "these are nothing but experiments; for my triumph I depend upon the seeds."

* Wild grape-vine.

Then, pointing to the hill-sides which were to be covered to the sea with his vines, he added, laughing his own hearty laugh:

"At any rate, whether the plan prospers or not, if the phylloxera wants to eat my plants it must order a set of new legs to climb so high."

One evening Monsieur Honnorat came in, dripping and chilled, having persisted, spite of the rain—a cold autumnal rain—in waiting to oversee his wild-vine planters.

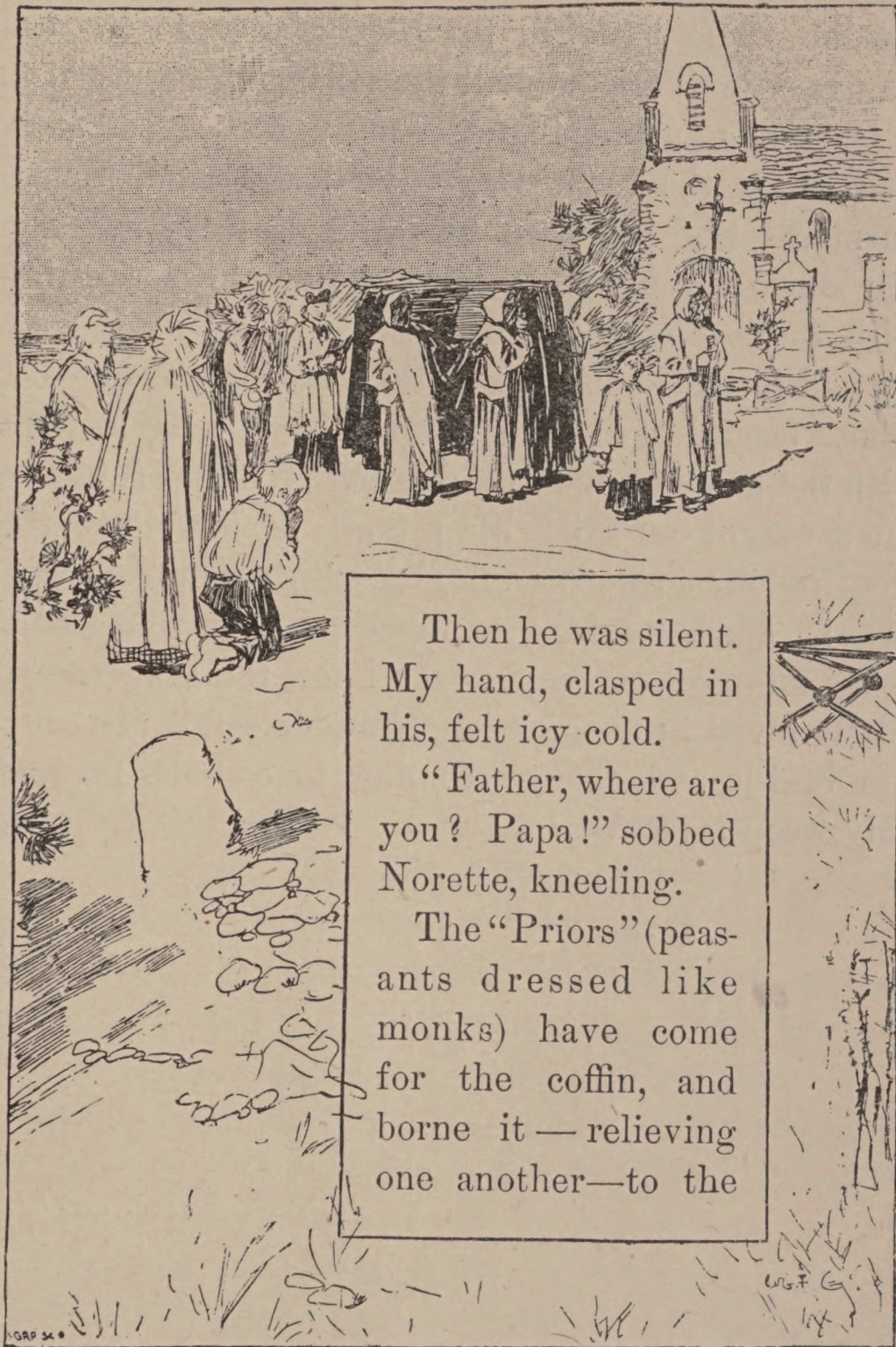
He found fault with the soup, though usually he had so good an appetite, and—a serious symptom—went back to his room without lighting his pipe. The next day he kept his bed, and Saladine became alarmed.

"'Gazan abed, Gazan dead,'" she repeated, trying to hide her tears. "I'm not mistaken. This is the third one in the house whose last toilet I have sorrowfully made."

Alas, Saladine was right! At the end of a week, spite of our nursing, Monsieur Honnorat died, calmly, almost painlessly.

A few minutes before, very weak, but in possession of all his mental faculties, he gave me numerous directions about the vines and jested with Norette. He did not complain, but it wearied him to remain quiet.

He wanted something to drink, and, to our surprise, with no apparent transition, we perceived that he was delirious. He fancied himself a child, spoke of his mother, and reliving, in the flash of a vision, by-gone years, called for former friends, set off on distant voyages.



Then he was silent.
My hand, clasped in
his, felt icy cold.

"Father, where are
you? Papa!" sobbed
Norette, kneeling.

The "Priors" (peas-
ants dressed like
monks) have come
for the coffin, and
borne it — relieving
one another—to the

church and the cemetery. Abbé Sèbe chanted the prayers. I followed with Skipper Ruf and Ganteaume—who hastened to Puget-Maure at the sad tidings—Peu-Parle, and all the villagers.

On our return I found Norette, accompanied by Tardive, in the room where the three candles were burning. She had been unwilling to leave it. The sun shone through the wide-open window, caressing with the same ray the bed where Monsieur Honnorat had just died and the pallid forehead of my wife, whose tearful eyes were nevertheless already radiant with the pride of maternal hopes. Whatever may be the excess of our grief, life protests against death, the woof of our joys ever mingles with that of our sorrows! Then, thinking of the dead man, who would never more see the sun, never know the grandson so dearly loved in imagination, I suddenly felt my courage vanish, and, though coming to console, I could only weep myself.

LI

NORETTE'S LAST SECRET

PERHAPS, omitting to write these last pages, I might have stopped at the happy moment when, under the white cliffs of Aygues-Sèches, Norette threw herself into my arms.

But Monsieur Honnorat's death is connected in a somewhat singular way with the story of the Golden Goat.

"Take good care of my seeds!" said the worthy man almost as his last request, just before expiring, his mind still occupied with his hobby.

These words, long forgotten, returned one day to my memory. February was drawing to a close, the flowers were opening on the hill-sides, and bits of green turf were gleaming among the rocks, announcing the short, bewitching spring of Provence.

While Norette, a devoted mother, was walking in the garden with the heir, I said to myself: "Let us see where grandfather's seeds are."

The seeds had not sprouted. Perhaps it might be necessary to give them a little air by stirring the earth in the nursery.

So, for the first time, I went into a low vault, hol-

lowed under the foundations of my tower and protected by a glass window, a sort of cellar aspiring to be a hot-house, where Monsieur Honnorat kept his tools.

Slugs were crawling about there, and the walls exhaled that odor of damp and musty vegetable-mould familiar to all amateur horticulturists.

I meant only to get the little plough, but curiosity, half ironical, half tender, stopped me.

Along the walls, on shelves, were rows of packages labelled: "Claret," "Muscat," "Double-seeded Greek"—all the varieties Monsieur Honnorat had expected to see grow and ripen on his estates of Puget-Maure.

One of the packages, the one marked "Double-seeded Greek," seemed to be wrapped in parchment, and what was my surprise on opening it to recognize the yellow hue and faded letters of a page of the Gazan journal.

Whence did it come, and who had torn the volume before the pious hecatomb made by Abbé Sèbe at the request of Madame Honnorat Gazan? What ignorant hand? Saladine's? Perhaps the page was the very one Madame Honnorat wished to keep, and ere she died made Norette tear out?

At any rate, this is what the page, so miraculously preserved, contained:

"And as, without reckoning the bloody quarrels fomented between kinsmen and brothers, this Golden Goat frequented only perilous places, wild regions, or precipices, whoever attempted by following it to gain

the Saracen treasure of the Kings of Majorca, exposed himself to certain death. So, for a thousand years and more, no daughter, either of the Galfars or of the Gazans, or of any other branch of the family, from fear of the dangers to be incurred, would reveal anything touching the aforesaid treasures, neither to the man who married her nor to any one whom she loved.

“It is also certain that, in the time of King René of Anjou, the Lady Guiraude Gazan, being fiercely pressed on this subject by her husband, a very extravagant man and a great gambler, answered :

“ ‘Take my jewels and sell them if you want money, but, spite of your evil life, I still love you far too much to place in your hands a secret that has already cost so many misfortunes.’

“And, her husband still urging her, after locking herself alone into her round room in the tower, she nobly, with a lofty courage, flung the talisman into the fire. This talisman was made of a fine silver bell, with a wooden collar like those worn by goats, the whole curiously wrought and covered with mysterious characters.

“The bell did not melt, and was found afterwards in the ashes, but the collar having been burned, the treasure departed in smoke with it. For the inscription had been so carefully combined that half was under the bell and half over the collar, so that having one of the parts without the other was the same as having nothing.

“So,” the quaint document concluded, “as the Lady Guiraude voluntarily lost the secret of the Goat, the

fate of the women in our family, says a proverb, is to keep their husbands poor because they love them too well."

Seeing me come out of the vault, through whose windows it was easy to watch me, Norette, who was still very sorrowful, began to smile.

Why? Could I have been her dupe? Had she, from sheer feminine malice and to color our artless love-romance with a dim reflection of heroism, simply amused herself with me in regard to the Golden Goat?

Many details now return to my memory—her smile, the discovery of the fragment of parchment in the exact spot where Norette knew very well I should find it some day, might make me suppose so.

Yet no!

Norette never thought of deciphering these yellow pages; she believed as sincerely as I in the treasure guarded by the Goat; and we were both thoroughly in earnest when, on the day we went fishing for sea-urchins in the *calanque* of Aygues-Sèches, Norette, to be sure that I loved her, I, to prove that I loved Norette, renewed, by completing it, the sacrifice of the Lady Guiraud.

However, everything is better as it is; legends, like love-affairs, profit by retaining a shade of mystery.

THE END.

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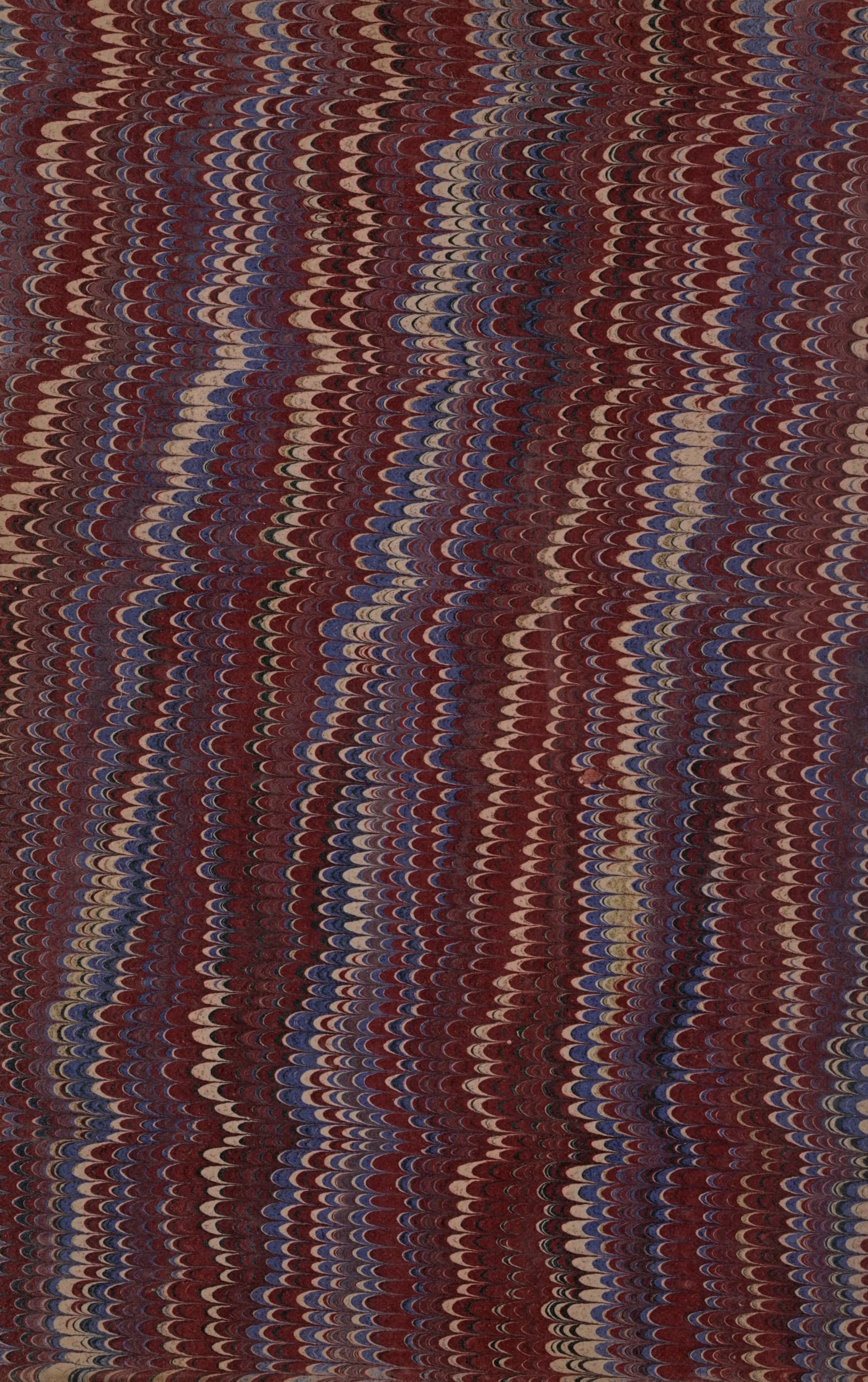
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